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# The Wider Life

J. R. Miller D.D.

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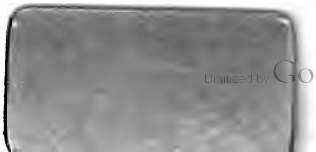

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# The Wider Life

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**Thomas Y. Crowell & Company**
**New York**


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# The Wider Life

BY

J. R. MILLER

AUTHOR OF
"SILENT TIMES," "FINDING THE WAY,"
"IN PERFECT PEACE," ETC.

*"I am sick of four walls and a ceiling.*
*I have need of the sky."*

New York

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
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## AUTHOR'S WORD

*WE do not realize half our possibilities. We do not more than begin to possess our inheritance. Our hills are full of gold and we only scratch the sand and the shallow soil on the surface. We live in little bungalows in the valley when there are splendid palaces waiting for us on the hilltops. Shall we not push out our tent-pins and get more room to live in?*

J. R. M.

*Philadelphia, U. S. A.*

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# The Wider Life



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*"Forbid me an easy place,*
*O God, in some sequestered nook,*
*Apart to lie*
*With folded hands, in quiet rest,*
*To doze and dream, and weaker grow,*
*Until I die.*

*"Give me, O Lord, a task so hard,*
*That all my powers shall taxed be*
*To do my best,*
*That I may stronger grow in toil,*
*And fitted be, for service harder still,*
*Until I rest.*

*"This my reward—development*
*From what I am, to what thou art,—*
*For this I plead;*
*Wrought out by being wrought upon,*
*By deeds reflective, done in love,*
*For those in need."*

—CHARLES C. EARLE.



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## CHAPTER ONE

# The Wider Life

E should never be content with a narrow life. We are made for breadth and fulness, and we rob God when we fail to reach our best. Some people assert that Christianity's ideal for life is narrow. They say it cramps and limits us. It has no place, for example, for physical or intellectual development. It says nothing about art, music, science, or the many phases of human activity. It presents only the moral side—conscience, obedience to heavenly laws, spiritual attainments and achievements.

The answer is that while Christianity may not definitely name the things of the intellect, or distinctly call men to noble achievements in art, in exploration, in invention, in research, in the culture of the beautiful, it really includes in its range everything that



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will add to the fulness and completeness of life and character. It excludes nothing but what is sinful—disobedience to law—impurity, selfishness, uncharity, and these only narrow and debase, do not broaden and enrich life. It includes "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." Is this a narrow life?

Our Christian faith places no limitation whatever on life except what would mar, blot, or debase the character. Japanese horticulturists have a trick of stunting trees, and the world is full also of stunted men, only dwarfs of what God made them to be. But the call of Christianity is always for whole men, men reaching up to their best, and out to their broadest in every way. The Chinese bind the feet, some nations mutilate the face, others repress and crush the feelings, affections, and desires, but Christianity seeks the fullest development of every power and capacity of



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the being. Jesus Christ, our pattern, would have us become full-grown men.

As leaders of others, as teachers, as followers of Christ, our influence should be toward the enriching and broadening of lives. A recent book is dedicated to a distinguished scholar and teacher, who is designated as an enlarger of human lives. There is no way in which we can prove ourselves better friends to others than by such influence over them as will make their lives fuller, truer, more loving, more helpful. One writes:

*"My life is a brief, brief thing,*
*I am here for a little space,*
*And while I stay,*
*I would like, if I may,*
*To brighten and better the place."*

There are many persons whose lives are small. They never grow into strength and beauty. It is said that Michael Angelo once paid a visit to the studio of Raphael, when the artist was absent. On an easel there was a canvas with the outline of a human figure, beautiful,



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but too small. Michael Angelo took a brush and wrote under the figure the word "Amplius"—larger. The same word might be written under many lives. They may be good and beautiful, but they are too small. They need to be enlarged. They have not sufficient height or breadth. They do not realize God's thought for them. They do not mean enough in the world.

There are many people who live in only one room, so to speak. They are intended to live in a large house, with many rooms, rooms of the mind, rooms of the heart, rooms of taste, imagination, sentiment, feeling. But these upper rooms are left unused, while they live in the basement.

A story is told of a Scotch nobleman who, when he came into possession of his estates, set about providing better houses for his people, who were living huddled together in single-roomed cottages. So he built for them pretty, comfortable houses. But in a short time each family was living, as before, in one room, and letting out the rest of the house.



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They did not know how to live in larger, better ways. The experiment satisfied him that people could not be really benefited by anything done for them merely from the outside. The only true way to help them is from within, in their minds and hearts. Horace Bushnell put it in an epigram—"The soul of improvement is the improvement of the soul." It is not a larger house that is needed for a man, but a larger man in the house. A man is not made larger by giving him more money, better furniture, finer pictures, richer carpets, an automobile, but by giving him knowledge, wisdom, good principles, strength of character; by teaching him love. A missionary took with him to some northern region a vine, which he planted. During the short summer it was put outside, and in the winter it was kept indoors. For ten years it lived, but grew only three feet and never put forth a blossom. The missionary was then sent to a southern clime and transplanted the vine. There it grew rapidly and bore much fruit. There are people who live in a chill



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atmosphere, and their lives amount to almost nothing. If we can give them summer warmth their lives will expand into beauty and fruitfulness.

Some lives are narrow by reason of the way their circumstances have dwarfed them. We may not say, however, that poverty necessarily has this effect, for many who are poor, who have to live in a little house, with few comforts and no luxuries, live a life that is large and free, wide as the sky in its gladness; while on the other hand there are those who have everything of an earthly sort that heart could desire, yet whose lives are narrow.

There are some people to whom life has been so heavy a burden that they are ready to drop by the way. They pray for health, and instead illness comes with its suffering and its expense. Their work is hard. They have to live in continual discomfort. Their associations are uncongenial. There seems no hope of relief. When they awake in the morning, their first consciousness is of the load they



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must take up and begin again to carry. Their disheartenment has continued so long that it has grown into hoplessness. The message to such is, "Enlarge the place of thy tent." No matter how many or how great are the reasons for discouragement, a Christian should not let bitterness enter his heart and blind his eyes so that he cannot see the blue sky and the shining stars.

Looked at from an earthly view-point, could any life have been more narrow in its condition than Christ's? Think who he was—the Son of God, sinless, holy, loving, infinitely gentle of heart. Then think of the life into which he came—the relentless hate that was about him, the bitter enmity that pursued him, the rejection of love that met him at every step. Think of the failure of his mission, as it seemed, and his betrayal and death. Yet he was never discouraged. He never grew bitter.

How did he overcome the narrowness? The secret was love. The world hated him, but he loved on. His own received him not, rejected



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him, but his heart changed not toward them. Love saved him from being embittered by the narrowness. This is the one and the only secret that will save any life from the narrowing influence of the most distressing circumstances. Widen your tent. Make room in it for Christ and for your neighbor; and as you make place for enlargement, the enlargement will come.

*"Make channels for the streams of love,*
*Where they may broadly run;*
*And love has overflowing streams*
*To fill them every one.*

*"But if at any time we cease*
*Such channels to provide,*
*The very founts of love for us*
*Will soon be parched and dried.*

*"For we must share, if we would keep*
*That blessing from above;*
*Ceasing to give, we cease to have—*
*Such is the law of love."*

There was a woman who had become embittered by a long experience of sickness and of



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injustice and wrong, until she was shut up in a prison of hopelessness. Then, by reason of the death of a relative, a little motherless child was brought to her door. The door was opened most reluctantly, at first; the child was not warmly welcomed. Yet when she was received, Christ entered with her, and at once the dreary home began to grow brighter. The narrowness began to be enlarged. Other human needs came and were not turned away. In blessing others, the woman was blessed herself. To-day there is no happier home than hers. Try it if you are discouraged. Begin to serve those who need your love and ministry. Encourage some other disheartened one, and your own discouragement will pass away. Brighten another's lonely lot, and your own will be brightened.

Some lives are made narrow by their limitations in opportunity. Some men seem not to have the same chance that others have. They may be physically incapacitated for holding their place in the march of life. Or they may have failed in business after many years of



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hard toil, and may lack the courage to begin again. They may have been hurt by folly or sin, and do not seem able to take the flights they used to take. There are some people in every community who, for one cause or another, do not seem to have a chance to make much of their life. But whatever it may be that shuts one in a narrow environment, as in a little tent, the gospel of Christ brings a message of hope and cheer. Its call ever is, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations."

There is danger that some of us overdo our contentment. We regard as an impassable wall certain obstacles and hindrances which God meant to be to us only inspirers of courage. Difficulties are not intended to stay our efforts, but to arouse us to our best. We give up too easily. We conclude that we cannot do certain things, and think we are submitting to God's will in giving up without trying to overcome, when in fact we are only showing our supineness. We suppose that our



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limitations are part of God's plan for us, and that we have only to accept them and make the best of them. In some cases this is true—there are barriers that are impassable—but in many cases God wants us to gain the victory over the limitations. His call is, "Enlarge the place of thy tent." Hard conditions do not necessarily make a life a failure. "What do you raise here, from these rocks?" asked a traveller in New England. "We raise men," was the answer.

If there can be no physical victory over physical handicaps, there can be always at least a moral victory. We should never accept a captivity that shuts our soul in any prison. Our spirit may be free though our bodily life is shut up in a prison of circumstances. An English writer tells of two birds, caught and put into cages side by side. One of them began to resist and struggle, flying against the wires of its cage in vain efforts to escape. The other quietly accepted its captivity, and, flying up on a bar, began to sing, filling all the place about with glad songs.



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The former bird was a captive indeed, shut up in a narrow, hopeless prison. The other turned its captivity into widest liberty and its narrow cage into a palace of victory. We say the starling acted very foolishly, and that the canary showed true wisdom. Which course do we take when we find ourselves shut up in any narrow, imprisoned life?

Life should never cease to widen. People talk about the "dead line"—it used to be fifty years; now it probably is under that. After crossing that line, they tell us, a man cannot do his best. It is not true—at least it should not be true. A man ought to be at his best during the last years of his life. He ought always to be enlarging the place of his tent until its curtains are finally pushed out into the limitless spaces of immortality.



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# Visions and Dreams



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*"The world wants men, large-hearted, manly men;*
*Men who shall join its chorus, and prolong*
*The psalm of labor and the psalm of love.*
*The age wants heroes—heroes who shall dare*
*To struggle in the solid ranks of truth:*
*To clutch the monster error by the throat;*
*To bear opinion to a loftier seat;*
*To blot the error of impression out,*
*And lead a universal freedom in.*
*And heaven wants souls—fresh and capacious souls—*
*To taste its raptures, and expand, like flowers,*
*Beneath the glory of its central sun.*
*It wants fresh souls, not lean and shrivelled ones;*
*It wants fresh souls—my brother, give it thine!"*



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## CHAPTER TWO

# Visions and Dreams

E owe everything that is good and beautiful to our visions. They lead us ever to higher things. They show us glimpses of character, of attainment, of achievement, beyond what we have yet reached, and the beauty or the excellence visioned before us starts in us a discontent with our present state and a longing to climb to the loftier heights. An artist has a vision of something lovely and paints it on his canvas or hews it out of his block of marble. An inventor has in his mind a dream of his invention, something which he believes will prove a boon to the world. He thinks and broods, and at last gives the fruit of his thinking and brooding a form that makes it practical.

Columbus was a dreamer. It was the belief



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in his day that there was nothing beyond the sea. On the pillars of Hercules they wrote *Ne plus ultra.* But Columbus had a vision of a continent beyond and heard the bidding, "Go and find it." Wise men laughed at his dream, but he could not put it out of his mind, and, sailing forth, he found a new world. Thus all progress and all advancement have been achieved. Men have dreamed and followed their visions and made them real.

One of the promised results of the coming of the Holy Spirit was the bringing of larger, fuller life. "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." It is supposed that old men do not dream any more. Their attainments and achievements are all in the past. But this need not be so. If this world were all, if death ended everything, there would be little use for the old to dream. They cannot do much in the small margin of life left to them. But death is not the end of life; it goes on beyond, infinitely and forever. St. Paul was an old man, but he was as full of hopes and enthusiasms as if he



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had been in the midst of youth. He was old when he described his scheme of life as forgetting things behind and reaching forward to things before.

Let not the old man think for a moment that his work is done, though he has lived his threescore and ten years, even though he be physically feeble. Let him keep his heart young, though his hairs be white. Let him keep his enthusiasms, though he be feeble and frail in body. Let him keep love in his heart, love for people, love for young people and children, sympathy with human need. Let him keep interested in others, not allowing himself to withdraw from active life, and then in a little while shrink away into a shrivelled shell of decrepitude and uselessness.

Old people with ripe experience can be of great service to younger people. "Old men for counsel." Let the old people feel that their work is not yet done, that the world still needs them, that they have no right to lapse into indolence. "Your old men shall dream dreams"—dreams of beauty, of help-



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fulness, of service—and then go out to make their dreams come true.

Sometimes we hear it said that miracles have ceased. This may be true in a sense, but it is not true that communication between heaven and earth has ceased. The ladder has not been taken down. God still puts into men's hearts inspirations, desires, hopes, longings. Every case of human need or distress that makes its appeal to us is a heavenly vision, calling us to do an act of kindness.

There is a pleasant legend of St. Martin. He was a soldier. It was in the depth of winter. One bitter night a beggar, scantily clad, asked alms of the soldier. All he had was his soldier's cloak. Drawing his sword he cut the cloak in half, gave one part of it to the poor man and was content himself with the other part. That night he had a wondrous vision. He beheld Christ on his throne. Looking closely, he saw that the King in his glory was wearing the half of the cloak which he had given to the beggar that night. Amazed, he



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heard the King say, "This hath Martin given to me."

Then there is a little story which tells of one who did not follow the vision of need.

*"This morning, as I hurried to my task,*
*I met a crying child. I did not stay*
*My steps to dry his tears, nor stop to ask*
*The reasons why he wept, for duty lay*
*So clear before me that I gave no thought*
*To blinder duties that to me were brought.*
*Indifferent, I hurried on my way.*

*"To-night when I met Jesus on my knees,*
*And asked what I might do for him, he said,*
*'What of the child I sent to you to-day—*
*The weeping baby, to be comforted?'*
*Amazed, I answered, 'Surely unto thee*
*I would give all; no tear was wiped for me.'*
*The dear Lord cried, 'My little children's tears*
*Are more than all the guerdon of the years.'*

*"Ashamed, confounded, that I did not know*
*'Twas Jesus' child, and in the baby see*
*My blessed Master coming unto me,*
*I begged him but to try me once again.*



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*'Give me the desert, with its thirst and pain:*
*I'll follow thee in loving sympathy.'*
*But oh! the child was gone: I did not dream*
*My Lord could pass unrecognized, unseen."*

Every case of suffering, of need, of sorrow, of which we learn is to us a vision of Christ himself in need, appealing to us for help. If we do the kindness that is required, we will be ministering to the Master himself.

Visions come to us also in beautiful lives that we see and know. We all know some one who, every time we meet him, makes us want to live better. He does not exhort us in words, does not chide us with criticisms, but there is something in his mere presence, something that starts in us a vision of gentleness, of peace, of purity, which calls us to a truer, more beautiful life. One said of another, "When I meet him on the street, the air is sweeter, and life means more to me afterwards." There are people in whose presence rude men grow gentle, and profane men would not dare utter an oath. There are



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those who never have a reproof to utter or a sharp word even for men who have no regard for God, and yet in whose presence the worst men become subdued and quiet. Every rarely beautiful Christian life starts in all hearts a heavenly vision which is followed unconsciously by those who see it. We do not know what we may be to each other. We do not know how our characters act on other lives. If we realized the meaning of our influence we would never dare live carelessly. One writes,

*"I would be true, for there are those who trust me;*
*I would be pure, for there are those who care."*

"Your young men shall see visions." When the divine Spirit fills our heart, we have glimpses of a life we have not yet reached. The coming of the Spirit is to our lives what the coming of spring is to the fields and gardens after winter. It brings an awakening, a quickening. But there are unheavenly visions as well as those that are pure and spiritual. If it is the Holy Spirit that per-



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vades our lives, our visions are holy. If it is the spirit of evil that is swaying us our visions will be debasing.

A vision of the world's need of Christ inspires men with the missionary spirit. There is a tendency among too many Christian people to turn away from evil men as if nothing could be done for them. But these are the very persons the sight of whom should most stir our compassion. A thoughtful man was pacing the docks at Liverpool and beheld great quantities of dirty waste material lying in unregarded heaps. He looked at the unpromising piles and then in his thought saw finished fabrics and warm and welcome garments made from them. Ere long the vision had come true and the outcast stuff began to be wrought into beautiful garments. When we look upon an outcast life, however hopeless it may be, we should think not of what it is, but of its possibilities, what it may become—a child of God, wearing the divine beauty. This vision will impel us to seek the life that is lost.



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Some people dream beautiful things and yet never make them real. Some seem to think that piety will take the place of toil and self-denying struggle in achieving their dreams. There is much very shallow and empty talk about praying. You cannot pray yourself into a noble character. You cannot pray for the relief of some distress and have the distress driven away. You cannot pray a vision into a worthy reality. You cannot pray a beautiful dream into a fine achievement. Sometimes prayer is not the duty. Dr. Adam Clarke, the great commentator, was an early riser. A young preacher was talking to him about this habit and said he was sorry he could not do the same. He wanted the Doctor to tell him how he did it. "Do you pray about it?" piously inquired the young man. "No," said Dr. Clarke, "I get up." Some people who never get on with their ideals want others who have learned to live nobly to tell them how they do it. "How did you learn to live contentedly, without worry, without fretting, without fussing or anxiety? I suppose prayer



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must be the secret." The answer is, "No; I do it."

Prayer is always sacred. It has mighty power.

> "*More things are wrought by prayer*
> *Than this world dreams of.*"

But there are some things which prayer will not accomplish—you must do them. God never works miracles in doing indolent people's work for them. Neither does he answer prayer for the realizing of one's fine dreams. Pray, certainly, for everything, but your own hands must work out your dreams. When an artist has a noble vision that he wants to see come into a great painting or a splendid statue, does he get down on his knees and pray his vision into the form? No: he spends months, perhaps years, in patient work, and at last he sees his ideal wrought into noble form.

When the Holy Spirit touches a human life glory springs up in it. It becomes capable of great things. It rises to new power. We know



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what different men Pentecost made of the peasant disciples. From being timid, fearful, afraid of a sneer, wilting under a girl's taunt, frightened by a jibe, they became in an hour brave, lion-hearted men, who feared nothing. From being without eloquence, without fine culture, they became at once mighty men filled with a new power by which they turned the world upside down.

Emerson said, "What I need is some one to make me do what I can." Few of us are doing what we might do. We are not reaching up to our best in anything. What we need is some one who will make us do what we can. It ought to be a parent's constant effort with a child. It ought to be a teacher's work with a pupil. It should be the aim of our friend. Some people seem to think that friendship does its best when it pampers, shelters and protects. But the really best that any friend can do for you is to inspire and quicken you, to put visions of highest beauty into your brain, to start gleams of nobleness in your heart and to make you do what you can.



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# The Wider Life

God has given us these wonderful lives of ours, but we do not know how to use them. We touch them with our hands. We try education. We submit them to our friends. Wonderful indeed are these brains, these hearts, these minds, these hands. But we never find or bring out the best that is in us until we let the divine Spirit breathe on us. When we are filled with the Spirit, our young men shall see visions, and our old men shall dream dreams. Then our lives shall reach their best.



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# Loyalty to Christ



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*"If thou, my Christ, to-day*
*Shouldst speak to me and say:*
*What battles hast thou fought for me?*
*Show me thy scars; I fain would see*
*Love's depth of victory.*

*"If thou shouldst speak, my Christ,*
*My Leader and my King,*
*And bid me lay my wounds in sight,*
*The scars borne just for thee in fight,*
*What love-scars could I bring?"*



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## CHAPTER THREE

# Loyalty to Christ

OYALTY to Christ begins in the heart. We must love him supremely. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Nothing makes worthy discipleship if love be lacking. In these days Christian activity is emphasized and required. Never was the church of Christ as active as it is now. This is beautiful. But with all our activity we may fear lest we are not loving Christ as we should.

In one of the epistles to the seven churches Jesus commends the church of Ephesus for many things—its works, its toil, its patience and that it could not bear evil men. "But," he adds, "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." With all its activ-



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ity and self-sacrificing service, it did not love him as it used to do. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan tells of a friend of his who had a little daughter that he dearly loved. They were great friends, the father and daughter, and were always together. But there seemed to come an estrangement on the child's part. The father could not get her company as formerly. She seemed to shun him. If he wanted her to walk with him, she had something else to do. The father was grieved and could not understand what the trouble was. His birthday came and in the morning his daughter came to his room, her face radiant with love, and handed him a present. Opening the parcel, he found a pair of exquisitely worked slippers.

The father said, "My child, it was very good of you to buy me such lovely slippers." "O father," she said, "I did not buy them —I made them for you." Looking at her he said, "I think I understand now what long has been a mystery to me. Is this what you have been doing the last three months?"



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"Yes," she said, "but how did you know how long I had been at work on them?" He said, "Because for three months I have missed your company and your love. I have wanted you with me, but you have been too busy. These are beautiful slippers, but next time buy your present and let me have you all the days. I would rather have my child herself than anything she could make for me."

We are in danger of being so busy in the Lord's work that we cannot be enough with the Lord in love's fellowship. He may say to us, "I like your works, your toils, your service, but I miss the love you gave me at first." There is real danger that we get so busy in striving to be active Christians, so absorbed in our tasks and duties, our efforts to bring others into the church, that Christ himself shall be less loved and shall miss our communing with him. Loyalty means first of all heart devotion. Has Christ really the highest place in your heart? It is not your work he wants most—it is you. It is beautiful to do things for him—it is still more



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beautiful to make a home for him in your heart. A young man, at great cost, has brought from many countries the most beautiful materials he could find and has built as a memorial to his dead wife an exquisite little chapel. Only a few men could do anything so rare, so lovely. But the poorest of us can enthrone our loved ones in our hearts, and the poorest of us can please Christ even more by making a little sanctuary in our hearts for him.

Then there must be loyalty of life. If there be true, supreme love in the heart, there should be a shining character. Here again we need to guard against devotion to the work and service of Christ while in the life the world sees there are so many flaws and blemishes that the impression is not to the honor of Christ. He is very patient with our infirmities and our stumblings. If he were not, who of us ever could hope to please him? We are inexperienced, mere learners, at first. We misspell our words. We blunder in our grammar. We sing out of tune. Some of us are just



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beginning our Christian life, and are discouraged already because we have failed to be what we meant to be, and to live as beautifully as we were sure we would live. Christ is patient with us when he knows that we are true in our heart, that we really want to be faithful. Charles Kingsley says: "Oh, at least be able to say in that day, 'Lord, I am no hero. I have been careless, cowardly, sometimes all but mutinous. Punishment I have deserved—I deny it not. But a traitor I have never been; a deserter I have never been. I have tried to fight on thy side in the battle against evil. I have tried to do the duty which lay nearest me, and to leave whatever thou didst commit to my charge a little better than I found it. I have not been good, but I have at least tried to be good.'"

Christ never forgets how frail we are. But he does not want us ever to give up. Though we stumble when we are learning to walk, he wants us to get up and try again. Though we are defeated in our battle to-morrow, he wants us to rise at once and keep on fighting.



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A true soldier may be wounded, may be beaten in many battles, but he never is a deserter, never is a traitor. He is always loyal. It is only when we desert Christ, turn away from him, become false to him, that we really fail. You never can fail if you are true, if you are faithful.

But we should always keep the standard of loyalty up to the highest point. The command is: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." That standard must never be lowered. Christ's own thought of loyalty is simple faithfulness. "Be thou faithful." Faithful seems a gracious word. It requires nothing impossible. It demands nothing unreasonable. It asks only for a just return. It does not exact ten talents when only two have been given. It is a word of love. Christ is a gentle taskmaster. Yet the word sets a high requirement—one, too, which cannot be lowered. It must have the best that we can do. When much has been given, a little will not be a satisfactory return.

There must be loyalty also in character. St.



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Paul suggests a cluster of the fruits of the Spirit which do not take an active form—"Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." Most of these are quiet virtues. They are qualities of character. One might possess many of them and not be able to say he was an active Christian. Peace is not active. Joy, long-suffering, goodness are not active. Yet these graces are essential to a complete Christian life. We must think of the passive and quiet virtues as well as the active when we are trying to discover the full meaning of loyalty to Christ.

Here is a man, for example, who bears the name of Christian. But he is not loving—he is hard to live with, suspicious, jealous, resentful. He has not joy, is morose, gloomy, a sad man. He has not peace—he is fretful, anxious, restless, full of fear and foreboding. He has not meekness—he is impatient, irascible, unmerciful. Lacking the qualities of love, joy, peace, meekness, can you call such a man a loyal follower of Christ? He may be



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a strenuous Christian so far as activities are concerned, a prominent church-member, a zealous church officer, foremost in the organizations of the church. Yet he is not a man you would call a beautiful Christian. Loyalty must be Christlike in character, in disposition, in spirit, in the shining of the face, in the lovingness of the heart.

But loyalty to Christ must also be active. A true patriot is a quiet and peaceable citizen in times of peace. But when the country is imperilled he is ready for service. He takes the soldier's place. The Christian belongs to the army of Christ and must follow his King to battle. He who fails to do his part in the conquest of the world cannot call himself fully loyal to Christ. He may not be an enemy of Christ, but he is a shirker, or he is lacking in courage. Loyalty to Christ means activity in the service of Christ. Find your work—what you can do to make the world better, happier, truer, and do it with all your might.

A good woman deplored her lack of useful-



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ness. Yet many knew that her daily life was a constant benediction. She sweetened a home, blessed a houseful of children and young people and manifested the love of Christ among her neighbors. Was not that being an active Christian? There is an activity of being as well as of doing. One wrote thus to a friend:

*"I wish that I might tell you what you are*
*To me—you seem so fine and strong and true,*
*So bold and yet so gentle, so apart*
*From petty strivings that confuse men's minds.*
*I wish that I might make you understand*
*How your clean, brave young life has made me brave."*

Was not that an active Christian life? Yet the one to whom these words were spoken had the feeling that he was not doing anything worth while for Christ. Another wrote to one who thought he was not living as well as he should for his Master:

*"I never crossed your threshold with a grief*
*But that I went without it; never came*



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*Heart-hungry but you fed me, eased the blame,*
*And gave the sorrow solace and relief.*

*"I never left you but I took away*
*The love that drew me to your side again*
*Through that wide door that never could remain*
*Quite closed between us for one little day."*

Loyalty to Christ is shown in using our life in whatever way we may be able and may have opportunity to use it. You cannot be loyal to Christ and not be good. You cannot be loyal to Christ and not be always abounding in his work.

Loyalty to Christ also demands of us the uttermost of sincerity and truth in all our living. God desires truth in the inward parts. Yet are there not men who claim to be Christians and are living a lie? There are lives that are honeycombed by all manner of unfaithfulnesses, dishonesties, injustices and injuries to others and by many secret sins. What does the lesson of loyalty to Christ have to teach



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us about these things? Are covered sins safely hidden? Are they out of sight forever? Oh, no; be sure your sin will find you out. The word is not, "Be sure your sin will be found out." It may not be found out in this world, but it will "find you out." It will plague you, spoil your happiness, make your life wretched. What shall we do about these wrong things we have done? A life of loyalty to Christ means a life that is white, clean, through and through. None can build a beautiful, shining character on covered sins. Joy is part of a complete Christian life, and no one can be joyous with sins concealed in his heart.

St. Paul has a word about bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. We should test every feeling, every imagination, every disposition, all conduct, by this test—loyalty to Christ. Some one does you a wrong, and you feel like getting angry. Be loyal to Christ. Keep your whole life, every day, every hour under the sway of his word.



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Loyalty to Christ! There really is nothing else in religion. It is all in these three words. I will be faithful to Christ. I will be true to Christ. I will please Christ. I will be obedient to Christ. I will do his will. I will submit to his discipline. I will bear the cross he lays upon me.

*"Strong and tender and true,*
*Crucified once for me!*
*Never will he change, I know,*
*Whatever I may be!*
*But all he says I must do,*
*Even from sin to keep free.*
*We shall finish our course*
*And reach home at last—*
*His child and he."*



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# God in Our Common Life



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*"Why seek ye for Jehovah*
*'Mid Sinai's awful smoke?*
*The burning bush now shelters*
*A sparrow's humble folk;*
*The curve of God's sweet heaven*
*Is the curve of the leaf of oak;*
*The Voice that stilled the tempest*
*To the little children spoke,—*
*The bread of life eternal*
*Is the bread He blessed and broke."*



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## CHAPTER FOUR

# God in Our Common Life

E sometimes forget that God has anything to do with the small events of our every-day lives. Men seem to be living a life of their own, without reference to God, without being influenced by him, without receiving help from him. They are not conscious of God. They go on working out their own schemes, following their own judgment, deciding questions for themselves, and seem rarely to become aware that there is any divine interference in their lives.

Yet nothing is truer than that God is always moving in our lives, in every life, in the smallest affairs of each life. He may not speak to us, telling us what to do. He may not seem to break into our plans, setting them aside when they are not wise or good. Yet he guides us in making our choices and decisions, and then



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cooperates with us in carrying them out; influencing us ofttimes when we know it not. He does not interfere with our freedom—he has made us sovereigns, and we do always as seemeth good unto ourselves. God never forces us to do anything. Yet he is ever modifying our choices and using them to fulfil his own purposes. We decide to take a journey, going by a certain route; then God leads us so that our route is changed and we are led some other way. Perhaps in our journey we come upon one who needs us, and we do him some kindness, and all life for us or for him is different ever afterward.

All life is full of God. The teachings of Christ make this very clear. He tells us that our heavenly Father feeds the birds. Two sparrows, he says, are sold for a penny, they are of so little worth, yet God does not forget even one of them. "Ye are of more value than many sparrows," and therefore God's care for you is many times more constant and more interested and tender. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." This does



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not need to mean that God actually counts our hairs and knows if one falls from our head and is lost. It means that he is interested in all the most minute events and circumstances of our lives. Nothing that concerns us is too small to be considered by him. He is near us in everything, helping, using, directing.

There is a beautiful Old Testament story which gives us a glimpse of the reality of the unseen world that always surrounds us. The servant of Elisha rose early, and, looking out at the window, saw an armed host surrounding the city. He was greatly alarmed, and cried, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" The prophet's answer was, "Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them." Then Elisha prayed that the young man's eyes might be opened, and he had a vision of a world he had not seen before. "Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." This was not a mere dream, nor a picture shown to this young man to quiet



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his dread. It was a glimpse of a reality which always exists. If we could see the things of the invisible world, we should discover that every life is surrounded by divine protection as actual and invincible as that which was about the prophet that morning. If we could see things as they are we should find that every life is divinely guarded, and every step divinely ordered. This is what we call providence. About every godly life angels encamp. In God we live and move and have our being.

*"God is on the field when he*
*Is most invisible."*

Not only is God with us in intimate companionship, but he works with us. We think we have done something good or beautiful, when really God has done it through us or working with us. A man was driving a pair of fine horses one day in the country. His little son sat beside him and held the lines in his hands. The boy was very proud at his achievement in driving. He had not noticed, however, that



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back of his hands his father's were also on the lines. In turning a curve in the road the little fellow felt one of the lines firmly drawn through his hand. He now saw how it was. Looking into his father's face, he said, "I thought I was driving, father, but I am not —am I?" We think we are driving, that we are doing certain things, when we are not. God's hands are back of ours.

We have an illustration of this divine activity in the affairs of the world, in the Acts, in the story of Philip's being sent to the desert. He was preaching in the city of Samaria with great power and success. Then suddenly he was directed by the Spirit to leave this work and go out alone on a desert road. He did not know where he was going, or why. Nobody lived in the desert. What could the Master want him to do out there? Yet he asked no questions. The narrative describes a beautiful heroism of faith in four words—"He arose and went." For a time he journeyed on obediently, without learning what the Lord wanted with him in that lonely place.



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At length he saw a chariot driving across the desert. Impelled by an irresistible impulse he ran toward the chariot. As he drew near, he saw a man sitting in it, reading a book. The man in the chariot wore the dress of a person of high rank. The man on foot felt an impulse to speak to the nobleman riding. So he opened conversation and asked him if he understood what he was reading. Perhaps he saw a troubled or perplexed look on the face of the traveller. It came out presently that the man in the chariot was greatly in need of a spiritual guide. It was a striking coincidence that here was the very man the nobleman needed to teach him the meaning of the Scripture that he could not understand. Philip sat beside him and explained to him the words he was reading, showing him a revealing of Christ in them.

The meeting of the two men out there in the desert was not accidental. It had all been divinely arranged for. We plainly see the providence in this particular instance. Usually we do not see God so plainly in life's ex-



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periences, but he is always in each one as really as he was in this case.

We are continually in the midst of divine providences. We go out on some simple journey, never thinking that it may have a meaning besides and beyond our own little business or pleasure, that God has a definite purpose in it. Presently we meet some one, perhaps a stranger, and discover that the meeting has not been an accidental one. We have been sent to this person on a sacred errand. He needs us—there is something God wants us to do for him. There are no accidental meetings of people. God arranges that certain persons shall cross our path at a definite moment. They are discouraged, and we can put a little cheer into their hearts. They are carrying a heavy burden—we cannot lift away the burden, for it is God's gift, and it would rob them of blessing and good to relieve them of it, but we may put new strength into their hearts, and thus make them more able to go on with their loads.

We are told just before the narrative of the



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woman at the well, that Jesus "must needs pass through Samaria." Wearied with his journey, he sat down to rest by the well. This was the human part. It seemed accidental. Then a woman came to the well to draw water. This was God sending one who sorely needed help to him who was not too weary to show a kindness which meant everlasting life to a sinful soul. In an old English poem there is this line:

*"It chanced—Eternal God that chance did guide."*

This is the meaning of every happening that comes into our lives. There is no chance. In the parable of the good Samaritan we are told of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, who was set upon by robbers that stripped him, beat him, and left him by the roadside half dead. The record says, "By chance a certain priest was going down that way." "By chance," that is, by coincidence, at the same time, just when he was needed. "It chanced—Eternal God that chance did



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guide." God sent the priest. It was all arranged and timed that he should be at the place just when the man had been left by the roadside bleeding, almost dead.

The timely coming that way of the priest at the very moment of need, we call, more devoutly, a providence. Men tell you how, often, just in the nick of time, something happened which saved them from impending danger of which they did not know. They say it was providential. This is what the word chance means in this parable. "Providentially a certain priest was going down that way just then." We are continually sent, providentially, that we may be at the place of need at the moment of need. It is not an accident that you are thrown some day with a man who is in trouble, needing help. "It chanced—Eternal God that chance did guide." Did you give the help God had planned and arranged to have you there at that moment to give?

It was not chance that brought Jesus to the well of Jacob that day, just before the woman



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came to draw water. God guided that chance. It was providential, we would say. That is the divine side of the meaning of the words, "He must needs pass through Samaria." And Jesus did not fail God—he did not pass by on the other side. He was weary, so weary that he could not go any farther, but sat down to rest while his disciples went on to the town to buy some food. He might have said that he was too tired to talk to this woman when she came down to get water. That is what some people say, some Christian people, too, when, providentially, a human need, a sorrow, a heart-hunger, meets them. "I am too tired. I am worn out. I do not feel well enough to do anything," or, "I have put on my house-coat and my slippers, and I cannot go out again to-night." But we never should fail God when by chance, providentially, he brings some piece of love's duty to our hand. No matter how weary we are, we should arise and do the work, give the relief, comfort the sorrowful, care for the orphan, visit the sick man, be a friend to the lonely



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one, care for the soul of the man for whom nobody else is caring.

Life is full of God. He is always coming to us. On our lightest days he faces us continually with some new task for our hands. We meet people as strangers, perhaps riding with them for a few miles on a railway train, or down town on the trolley car, and the opportunity is given to say a word whose influence may change a life, showing the face of Christ to one who knew him not, revealing a thought of comfort which makes a sorrowing heart stronger to go on with its load of grief. Even chance meetings are providential opportunities, arranged by God himself, for helping his children.

We do not begin to know how holy all our life is, how full of God. Perhaps the person you are sitting with and talking to needs the words you have ready on your lips to speak. They are words of life, eternal life, which you do not get time to speak, because there are so many idle words that insist on being spoken. Coventry Patmore, in one of his poems, dwells



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on the criticalness of the most common meetings we have with others:

*"If thou dost bid thy friend farewell,*
*But for one night though that farewell may be,*
*Press thou his hand in thine."*

You may never see your friend again, and therefore your parting, though but until tomorrow, as you suppose, should be kindly and affectionate, fit for a last parting. You do not know that it may not be the last. Then the poet gives this lesson about our talks and conversations with others:

*"Yea, find thou always time to say some earnest word*
*Between the idle talk,*
*Lest with thee, henceforth, night and day,*
*Regret should walk."*

God is in every experience of life. If sickness comes, you "must needs" pass through it. It is not accidental. It is not to be an empty experience. The time in the sick-room is not meant to be lost time. There will be duties,



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there will be lessons to learn, there will be blessings to receive. If sorrow comes, you "must needs" pass through it. It will not be an easy way, but the "must needs" will make it sacred, God's way, and if you pass through it reverently, trustingly, with acquiescence, the way will be bright with God's presence. If it should be the way of death, you must needs walk in it, and the must needs will make it the divinely chosen way for you, a way shining with love and joy.



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# The Things that Are Above



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*"Touch the rock-door of my heart,*
*Christ, dead for my sin!*
*Say, 'Come—let us rise, and depart*
*From the shadows within—*

*"'Out where the light of the stars*
*Shines clear overhead;*
*Where the soul is free from its bars,*
*And Sin lies dead.'*

*"And dead the old Shadow lies,*
*That has chilled my breast;*
*Say to the sleepers 'Arise!'*
*Lead them to rest!"*

—LAUGHLAN MACLEAN WATT.



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## CHAPTER FIVE

# The Things that Are Above

T. PAUL reminds us that those who believe on Christ should live a risen life. He says, "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is." We live on the earth at present. We walk on earth's streets. We live in material houses, built of stones, bricks, or wood. We eat earth's fruits, gathering our food from earth's fields, orchards and gardens. We wear clothes woven of earthly fabrics. We adorn our homes with works of art that man's hands make. We engage in the business of earth. We find our happiness in the things of this life.

But there will be a life after this. We call it heaven. We cannot see it. There is never a rift in the sky through which we can get even a glimpse of it. We have in the Scriptures hints of its beauty, its happiness, its



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blessedness. We know it is a world without sorrow, without sin, without death.

St. Paul's teaching is that the Christian, while living on the earth, ought to begin to live this heavenly life. One day before Easter a friend sent me a splendid butterfly, artistically mounted, known as the Luna Moth. This little creature is said to be the most beautiful of North American insects. Its color is light green with variegated spots. In its caterpillar state it was the Luna Silkworm —only a worm. It died and entered its other or higher state, as we would say, and then the worm became a splendid butterfly.

This illustrates the two stages of human life. Here we are in our earthly state. After this will come the heavenly condition. "The things that are above" belong to this higher, spiritual life. But the Christian is exhorted to seek these higher things while living in this lower world. We belong to heaven, although we are not yet living in heaven. We have it in one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer—"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The



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prayer is that we may do God's will not merely when we get to heaven, but now, while we are on the earth, as the holy ones who are in heaven do it. The law of the heavenly life is to be the law of God's children in this world. We are to seek the things that are above where Christ is.

St. Paul presents the same truth in another form when he says, "Our citizenship is in heaven." We are in this world, but we do not belong here. We are only strangers, pilgrims. We travel abroad. We visit cities, looking upon beautiful things, mingling with the people of other lands, charmed by what we see, but we are only tourists. Something tugs at our hearts continually—it is home. So while we still live in this world we are citizens of heaven. Christ is our King. We owe him our allegiance, our obedience. We are to seek the things that are above, where Christ is.

We can conceive only dimly of the things that are above. Nothing that is unloving is found there. God is love, and only love can live where God is. The thirteenth chapter of



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First Corinthians is a little earthly vision of some things that are above. It tells how the inhabitants live together. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Love is one of the things that are above where Christ is, which we are also to have here.

Truth is another. The Scriptures say, "He that uttereth lies shall perish." This means all kinds of lies; lies people tell with their lips, lies they tell in the work they do. One of the most damaging things that can be said of a man is that he is not truthful. He is a liar. Nobody believes him. Nobody has any confidence in him. In the Book of Revelation we read of certain persons who are shut out of heaven, and among these are all liars. Even in this world a liar is shut out of every place



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in which honorable men gather. Falsehood is always dishonoring. On the other hand, truth makes a man honored. There are certain names which shine bright and fair after centuries, because they are synonyms of truth and honesty. The finest violins in the world are those which were made by Antonio Stradivari, who lived more than two hundred and fifty years ago. They were exquisitely beautiful. Stradivari was scrupulously careful in every smallest part of his workmanship, no more with what all eyes would see than with what no one could see. He said he must always do his best—that if his hands slacked in any part of his work he would rob God and leave a blank, where there should be good violins. His aim was that so long as

*"Any master holds,*
*'Twixt chin and hand, a violin of his,*
*He will be very glad that Stradavari lived,*
*Made violins, and made them of the best."*

Shakespeare says, "The truest treasure mortal times afford, is spotless reputation."



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Reputation is won by what we do and what we are in life. Spotless reputation must be, can be only, the harvest of honor and truth in living. President Eliot named certain things which an honorable man cannot do, never does. "He never wrongs or degrades a woman. He never wrongs or cheats a person weaker or poorer than himself. He never betrays a trust. He is honest, sincere, candid, generous—not generous with money only, but generous also in his judgments of men and women." Reputation is made by the words and deeds of every passing day. Truth is among the things that are above, where Christ is, which we, as Christians, should always seek in our present life.

In saying that we should do the things of the heavenly life in this earthly life, we are not to infer that the common work of this world is unworthy. We use the words secular and spiritual sometimes in a way that disparages what we call secular. We talk about the secular affairs of a good man, or of a church, as if they were not sacred, at least as if they



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were of a lower order than certain other kinds of work which we call spiritual. We need to guard ourselves carefully in making such distinctions, lest we do dishonor to men or women who do as holy and as worshipful service in their common, daily taskwork, as they could do if their lives were devoted to spiritual service.

The New Testament says not a word against what we call secular business. Jesus did not ask that his disciples should be taken out of the world—he asked rather that they should stay in the world, and that they should be kept from the world's evil. It is as much a duty to earn one's daily bread as it is to pray and to go to the Lord's Table. Work is a means of grace—it is idleness that draws a curse to itself. The holiest duties of earth are ofttimes found in places which seem unheavenly. It is the heart that makes any service sacred or reverent. One may be a bootblack, and please Christ better, get greater blessing, be a better citizen of heaven, than another who is a minister of the gospel,



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busy with insistent duties. We must never forget that the Son of God came to earth and spent thirty years in what we would thoughtlessly call secular work. While he wrought at his carpenter's bench, his heart was in the holy of holies. He was in communion with the Father all the while he was toiling with the axe, hammer and saw. Let no one call the carpenter work of Jesus unholy—it was as pleasing to his Father as what he did later, when he went about healing, teaching and blessing the sorrowing.

When we seek to do the things that are above, where Christ is, most of us find the bulk of our occupation in common tasks and duties. To-morrow we shall have to rise early, and go to our business, and there will be no dishonor, no irreverence in our most diligent devotion to these common tasks and occupations. We may please our Master just as well in these things that are given to us to do, as we please him on Sunday in specific acts of worship.

A mother among the very poor died and left



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a little daughter with a heritage of love and sacrifice. She bade her to be kind to her father, who was a drunkard. She would often be abused, beaten by him, when he came home at night, but she was always to be patient and gentle with him. "Remember it's all the drink." The other younger children were also confided to her keeping and she was to do all she could for their comfort. She was wondrously loving and kind, living the lesson of love so beautifully that heaven must have looked down with approval upon her sweet life. But she never could go to church or to Sunday school. There were some godly people who tried to get her to the mission, and they told her that Christ would not be pleased with her unless she would attend the services. Mary was frightened and feared that she should not be saved, for the care of the children and of her drunken father gave her no time for anything else.

When the heated season came Mary took the fever. Her body had been weakened by the care and toil, and she was unable to endure.



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She grew worse and worse, and the doctor said she could not live. One day Mary sent for the playmate who lived across the street and said, "The charity doctor has been here, Katie. He says I'll never be any better. If it wasn't for one thing I'm sure I'd just be glad. You know how it's been here, Katie—I've had so much to do I couldn't mind the children and go to the preaching, too. And I've been so tired at night I couldn't think to pray. And now, when I see the dear Lord Jesus, what can I say?" Then Katie, the little comforter, her help to the problem brought; into the heart made wise by love, the Spirit sent this thought: "I wouldn't say a word, dear, for well he understands. I would say never a word at all. But, Mary, just show him your hands." That was enough. The hands that had wrought so faithfully would tell the whole story.

Going to church is a duty. Christ loves to meet us there. It is his appointment with us. Unless some other duty hinders us we should never be absent. But in little Mary's case



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it was impossible to do love's duty well in her place and also attend the services of the church. "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is," meant for her doing the things of love in her own home. If you are needed to help others, to care for the sick, as doctors and nurses must do, to serve those who are suffering, or in trouble, do not be afraid if you cannot go to the meetings. "Just show him your hands." The hands that serve and bless are hands that are like Christ's hands, and the things of love are things that are above.

It may seem an impossible life to which this message calls us, but no divine command ever calls one to an impossibility. To enter the kingdom of heaven is to begin to do here the things of heaven. At first it will not be easy, but in doing the will of God we learn to do it better. When the master found his pupil sleeping for very weariness beside his unfinished picture, discouraged and sick at heart because he had not been able to do it as he wanted to do it, he took the brush and



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finished it with his own hand. So will our Master do for us when we have done our very best and still have fallen short—he will add his own touch to it, and our poor efforts will appear in perfect beauty. Seek the things that are above where Christ is, and your life will grow here into the beginnings of heavenliness as the days pass, and at last when you reach glory you will find that you have the lesson full learned.



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# The Inner and the Outer Life



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*"Old? Well, the heavens are old; this earth is, too;*
*Old wine is best, maturest fruit most sweet;*
*Much have we lost, more gained, although 'tis true*
*We tread life's way with most uncertain feet.*
*We're growing old!*

*"We move along, and scatter as we pace*
*Soft graces, tender hopes on every hand;*
*At last with gray-streaked hair and hollow face,*
*We step across the boundary of the land*
*Where none are old."*



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## CHAPTER SIX

# The Inner and the Outer Life

E are not merely bodies. There is a life within our body which goes on when the body has ceased to exist. The inner man does not wear out as the body wastes. It does not grow old, nor become feeble with the years. The inner life is not dependent on the outer. One may be physically broken and decrepit, and yet spiritually strong. St. Paul states this truth when he says, "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." The outer may be destroyed and the man still live on. "I will kill you," said the emperor in his rage to an undismayed follower of Christ, standing before him. "That you cannot do," said the Christian, "for my life is hid with Christ in God."

The lesson of the undecaying life has a spe-



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cial application to those who suffer from sickness or from any bodily affliction. It will help us to endure physical sufferings quietly and unmurmuringly, if we will remember that it is only the outward man that can be touched and affected by these experiences, and that the inward man may not only be kept unharmed but may be growing all the while in beauty and strength, being spiritually renewed through pain and suffering.

A poor shoemaker in his dreary little shop in a great city, one day found by accident that there was one little place in his dark room from which he could get a view, through a window, of green fields, blue skies and far-away hills. He wisely set his bench at that point, so that at any moment he could lift his eyes from his dull work and have a glimpse of the great, beautiful world outside. From the darkest sick-room and from the midst of the keenest sufferings there is always a point from which we can see the face of Christ and have a glimpse of the glory of heaven. If only we will find this place and get this vision, it



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will make it easy to endure even the greatest suffering.

Sickness is discouraging and is hard to bear. But we should remember that the doing of the will of God is always the noblest, holiest thing we can do any hour, however hard it may be for us. If we are called to suffer, let us suffer patiently and sweetly. Under all our sharp trials let us keep in our hearts the peace of God. Under the snows of suffering, let us cherish the fairest, gentlest growths of spiritual life. The outward man may indeed decay, but the inward man will be renewed day by day.

The teaching has an application also to those who are growing old. St. Paul was an old man when he wrote these triumphant words. As a missionary he had travelled over many lands to carry the gospel to lost men. He had been exposed to storms, fevers and persecutions. He had suffered all manner of hardships and was a broken man. The old house he had lived in so long was battered and shattered. But while his body was thus worn out—the out-



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ward man decaying—his inward man was strong, undecaying, triumphant.

The problem of Christian old age is to keep the heart young and full of hope and of all youth's gladness, however feeble and broken the body may become. We need to be most watchful, however, lest we allow our life to lose its zest and deteriorate in its quality when old age begins to come on. The best, then, seems behind us and there is less to draw us on. Hopes of achievement appear to be ended for us—our work is almost done, we think. Sometimes people, as they grow old, become less sweet and less beautiful in spirit. Troubles, disasters and misfortunes have made the days hard and painful for them. Perhaps health is broken and suffering is added to the other elements that make the old age unhappy.

Renan, in one of his books, recalls an old French legend of a buried city on the coast of Brittany. With its homes, public buildings, churches, and thronged streets, it sank instantly into the sea. The legend says that the



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city's life goes on as before, down beneath the waves. The fishermen, when in calm weather they row over the place, think they sometimes can see the gleaming tips of the church spires deep in the water, and fancy they can hear the chiming of the bells in the old belfries, and even the murmur of the city's noises.

There are men who in their old age seem to have an experience like this. Their life of youthful hopes, dreams, successes, loves and joys, has been sunk out of sight, submerged in misfortunes and adversities, and has vanished altogether. Nothing remains of it all but a memory. In their discouragement they often think sadly of their lost past and seem to hear the echoes of the old songs of hope and gladness, and to catch visions of the old beauty and splendor. But that is all. Nothing real is left. Their spirits have grown hopeless and bitter.

But this is not worthy living for those who are immortal, who were born to be children of God. The hard things are not meant to



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mar our life—they are meant to make us all the braver, the worthier, the nobler.

*"Confide ye aye in Providence,*
*For Providence is kind,*
*And bear ye a' life's changes*
*Wi' a calm and tranquil mind.*
*Tho' pressed and hemmed on every side,*
*Hae faith and ye'll win through,*
*For ilka blae o' grass keps*
*Its ain drap o' dew."*

It is not meant that the infirmities of old age shall break through into our inner life; that should grow all the more beautiful the more the outer life is broken. The shattering of the old mortal tent should reveal more and more of the glory of the divine life that dwells within.

Do you ever think, you who are growing old, that old age ought really to be the very best of life? We are too apt to settle down to the feeling that in our infirmities we cannot any longer live beautifully, worthily, usefully or actively. But this is not the true way to think



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of old age. We should reach our best then in every way. That is what Browning declares in "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

*"Grow old along with me!*
*The best is yet to be,*
*The last of life, for which the first was made:*
*Our times are in His hands*
*Who saith, 'A whole I planned:*
*Youth shows but half; trust God; see all nor be afraid.'"*

Is it not true that old age should be the best, the very best, of all life? It should be the most beautiful, with the flaws mended, the faults cured, the mistakes corrected, the lessons all well learned. Youth is full of immaturity, mid-life is full of toil and care, strife and ambition. Old age should be as the autumn, with its golden fruit. We ought to be better Christians than ever we have been before, more submissive to God's will, more content, more patient and gentle, kindlier and more loving, when we grow old. We are drawing nearer to heaven every day, and



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our visions of the Father's house should be clearer and brighter. Old age should always be the best of life in its harvest, not marked by emptiness and decay, but by richer fruitfulness and more gracious beauty. It may be lonely, with so many gone of those who used to cluster about the life, but the loneliness will not be for long, for it is drawing nearer continually to all the great company of waiting ones in heaven.

Old age may be feeble, but the marks of feebleness are really foretokens of glory. Dr. Guthrie, as his life grew feeble, spoke of his thin locks, his trembling steps, his dulness of hearing, his dimness of eye and the crow's-feet, as like the land birds lighting on the shrouds, telling the weary mariner that he was nearing the haven. The old people have no reason for sadness; they are really in their best days. Let them be sure to live now at their best. St. Paul was growing old when he wrote of his enthusiastic vision of beauty yet to be attained, but we hear no note of age or weariness from him. He did not think of his



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life as done. He showed no consciousness that he had passed the highest reach of living. He was still forgetting the past and reaching forth, because he knew that his best was yet before him. His outward man was feeble, his health shattered, his physical vigor decaying, but the life of the man within was undecayed and undecaying. He was never before so Christlike as he was now, never so full of hope, never so enthusiastic in his service of his Master.

Those who are growing old should rise to holiest joy, to most triumphant faith, to sweetest love, to most rapturous praise, and should attain the ripest spiritual fruitfulness. They should do their best work for Christ in the days that remain for them. They should live their gentlest, sweetest, kindliest, most helpful life in the time they have yet to stay in this world. They should make their years of old age years of quietness, of peace, a glad, holy eventide. In trust and peace they should nestle like a little child in the everlasting arms that are underneath them, and give



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out to all who are about them the sweetest love, the holiest joy, the most blessed hope. But this can be the story of their experience only if their life be hid with Christ in God. Apart from Christ, no life can keep its zest or its radiance.

*"I heard the sparrow's note from heaven,*
*Singing at dawn on an alder bough;*
*I brought him home: in his nest at even*
*He sings the song, but it cheers not now,*
*For I did not bring home the river and the sky:*
*He sang to my ear—they sang to my eye."*

Those who are younger may do much to add to the zest and gladness of old people. They are lonely. Nearly all of the friends who used to brighten their lives with their companionship are gone. Yet the hunger for love remains. Blessed are the old who are surrounded by happy young people who are loving and willing enough to show them attention, to be affectionate to them, to give time and thought to them. Old people never get beyond the need of gentle kindness, nor reach a time



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when they do not care any more for love's expressions.

*"Put your arm around me—*
*There—like that:*
*I want a little petting*
*At Life's setting.*

*"For it is harder to be brave*
*When feeble age comes creeping,*
*And finds me weeping,*
*Dear ones gone.*

*"Just a little petting*
*At Life's setting;*
*For I am old, alone and tired,*
*And my long life's work is done."*

This lesson has its comforts also for the believer in death. Some good people dread death. It seems extinction, the end of all. Oh, no: it is the end of nothing but sin and mortality. Do you remember Thomas Hook's epitaph? "Here endeth the first lesson." The second lesson comes after. "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is



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renewed." When the body dies, the spirit, the immortal part, escapes out of its dissolved dwelling-place to live forever with Christ. Dying hurts no believer. It is emancipation—"absent from the body, at home with the Lord."

Fear nothing if your life is hid with Christ in God. The things that can decay only make the undecaying things more manifest. When the earth perishes heaven will be seen as our final, imperishable home.

*"Ye dainty mosses, lichens gray,*
*Pressed each to each in tender fold,*
*And peacefully thus, day by day,*
*Returning to their mould;*

*"If we, God's conscious creatures, knew*
*But half your faith in our decay,*
*We should not tremble as we do*
*When summoned clay to clay.*

*"Ye dead leaves, dropping soft and slow,*
*Ye mosses green and lichens fair,*
*Go to your graves, as I will go,*
*For God is also there."*



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# The Print of the Nails



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*"Life is a burden; bear it;*
*Life is a duty; dare it;*
*Life is a thorn-crown; wear it.*
*Though it break your heart in twain,*
*Though the burden crush you down;*
*Close your lips and hide your pain:*
*First the cross, and then the crown."*

*"Every rose of life, and every thorn,*
*Is consecrated by remembrance sweet—*
*Because once long ago Love did not scorn*
*To tread the wilderness with bleeding feet."*



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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# The Print of the Nails

HOMAS had missed seeing Jesus in the upper room when he showed his wounded hands to the disciples and he declared that unless he saw the hands for himself and the print of the nails in them he would not believe. In a sense Thomas was right. If the print of the nails had not been in the hands of him who stood in the midst of the disciples that night, it would not have been the Christ. There is a strange legend which says that once there came to the cell of a saintly monk one who knocked and desired admittance. His manner was lordly. His dress was rich. His hands were jewelled. "Who art thou?" asked the saint. "I am Jesus," was the answer. There was something in the voice and manner of the visitor which made the godly one suspect that he was not the Holy



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One he claimed to be. He looked at him closely for a moment, and then asked, "Where is the print of the nails?" Instantly the stranger turned away. It was the Evil One, not the Master. Nothing is Christ or of Christ which does not bear the mark of the nails.

Said another saint, "There are many hands offered to help you. How shall you know the right one?" Then he answered, "Because in the centre of the palm there is the scar of a wound received long since, but now glorious with light, according to the saying, 'He had rays coming out of his hand.'"

Every one who comes to offer help, friendship or guidance, must be subjected to this test. If there is no print of the nails in the hand that is offered, it is not a hand whose help you should accept.

What does the print of the nails stand for? We know what it meant in the hands of Christ. It told the disciples that night that this man they saw before them was their friend who had died on the cross. It was the



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infallible mark of identification. It also proved to them that he was risen and alive again. They thought they had lost him, but now they had him again. It was the proof, too, that he was the Messiah, as they had believed. Their hopes had not perished. All this the print of the nails meant to the disciples.

As we look at his hands what do they tell us about Jesus? He was dead. Yes, but why? The wounds in his hands tell us that he died as our Redeemer. He was the Lamb of God that took away the sin of the world. We have it in the old prophet: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." That is, the print of the nails tells us that Jesus Christ loved us and gave himself for us. It means, then, love and sacrifice. But it is not only in the Christ dying that we find this mark, this print of nails—it was just as plain and clear in his whole life before he died as it was when he was on the cross. Wherever we see him this mark is on him. He did not love us any more the first



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Good Friday, when he was dying for us in the darkness, than he did the day he took the little children in his arms and blessed them, or the day he fed the hungry people in the desert. His whole life was one of love and sacrifice. He was always loving. He was always forgetting himself. He was always serving.

Christ wants to see the print of the nails also in us—in our hands, in our hearts, in our lives. This does not mean that we must be nailed on a cross as our Master was. There is no need for another sacrifice for sin. Neither does it mean that we must wear actual nail wounds in our flesh. One of the old legends tells of a certain saint who gazed so continuously upon the crucifix, that in his hands came the actual print of the nails as if he had been crucified. But even if this had actually occurred, and if in our hands came also these physical marks of crucifixion, it would not meet our Lord's desire. What he wishes is the print of the nails, not physical marks in our bodies, but in our character, in



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our disposition, in our conduct, in our serving of others.

What then does it mean for us to have in us the print of the nails? The cross meant love, love that stopped at no sacrifice. The deepest meaning of Christ's cross was vicarious suffering. He gave himself for us. Then we turn to St. John's Epistle and read this: "He laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." This may not be required literally, but it is required in life, in spirit, in act. How is it necessary for every Christian to lay down his life for others? Some one writes: "The nails of the true cross to-day are precisely those acts and decisions of ours which transfix our common selfishness. Whenever we deny ourselves willingly for the love of others who do not love us, whenever we spend pains and patience to understand those who have no sympathy with us, whenever we give up ease, profit, or reputation for the unthankful and the evil, we are beginning to receive upon us these sacred marks of the Crucified."



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You have your own work or your own pleasure planned, and some one needs you. It may not be one of your own family, or one whom you call friend, or one for whom you are proud to do a service. It may be one who has no claim of kinship or friendship on you, one you do not care for, one you even dislike. Yet one, some one, any one, needs you and you sweetly give up your planned work or pleasure and turn cheerfully, with love, to do the thing that is needed instead. That is a print of the nails.

One way, for instance, in which the print of the nails is shown is in getting on happily and kindly with disagreeable persons. A plain woman gave this definition of Christian love —"Loving people you don't like." Another Christian woman tells of her own experience in trying to do this. She asks, "Did you ever have a person in your home who acted as a perpetual rasp on the feelings of your household? I had," she continued. "One day I had nearly lost my faith and was sinking in the black waters of despair. I called on Christ to



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help me, or I would perish. And what do you think he asked me to do? To love this woman. This was the only ladder he offered me up out of the black depths. Then I grew uglier than ever, and almost hated my Saviour. The struggle went on until I could stand it no longer. In anguish I rushed to my closet and again besought Jesus to help me. It seemed then as though, in a most tender, loving voice, he asked, 'Can't you love her for my sake?' I said, 'Yes, Lord, I will.' At once a peace filled my heart. My feelings toward her had changed entirely. I had yielded my will to Christ."

We see plainly and deeply marked in this new love the print of the nails. It is easy—it leaves no wound prints—to love those we like, those to whom our hearts go out in affectionate tenderness, those who are naturally dear to us. But that is not all that is required and does not test our lives. We are to love the disagreeable, those who rasp our feelings by their presence, their manner, their bearing. It is when we love such as these and get along



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sweetly in their company, that our Master sees the print of the nails in us.

Or take it in our service of others. Jesus humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant. The highest exhibition of this was on the cross when he died serving us—serving those who hated him. But his whole life was serving. He altogether forgot himself. Love led him on from self-sacrifice to self-sacrifice. When he found a need, whatever it was, he stopped and relieved it. He never passed by a distress without heeding it. He never excused himself when anyone wanted him. He never said he was too tired to help. He literally poured out his life in doing good to others, ofttimes to those who were most unworthy and most ungrateful. The print of the nails appears in all his story.

That is what it is to give our lives for the brethren. That is what it is to have in our hands the print of the nails. Anybody can do gentle things for gentle people. Anybody can serve kind and worthy friends. There is no print of the nails in such service. The good



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Samaritan served a man who would have spurned him if he had met him on the street. A Christian man was called upon by another who had wronged him in ways most malign and offensive, asking now, however, in a great and pressing need, for help. Other persons had been appealed to by him, but had refused to do anything. Even his own brothers and sisters had turned away, saying they would do nothing for him. All the world had grown tired helping him; no one was left. When the appeal came to this man to relieve the distress, though there was no confession made of the grievous wrong done in the past, no apology offered, he quietly and without a word, at sore cost to himself, and cheerfully gave the help that was needed. See the print of the nails.

Christ wants to see the print of the nails also in our spirit and disposition. Do we really think often of what it is to be Christlike in spirit, in temper, in mood, in manners? Some people, Christians, too, are so touchy that their friends have to measure all their words



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most carefully lest they offend them. Some people, Christians, too, seem to have no control whatever of their temper. Some people, Christians, too, are so hard to live with or to work with that they have scarcely a friend. These are not prints of the nails of Christ's cross.

It is not easy always to keep sweet, for we all have causes for irritation. It is not easy always to be patient, to keep good temper, to give the soft answer that turneth away wrath, to offer the other cheek when one has been smitten, to return kindness for unkindness, to overcome evil with good. Yet these are the print of the nails, which are the true adornment of Christian life and character. "Love suffereth long, and is kind"—never grows unkind. Love "is not provoked"—does not lose temper, keeps always sweet. Love "seeketh not its own"—always forgets self and thinks of the other who needs.

We see the print of nails in Christ's own life. He never did a selfish thing, never spoke a selfish word. He never winced, showing



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repugnance and acting disagreeably. It was not easy, either, for him—but the love in his heart never failed. It is in doing the hard things of love that the print of the nails is seen.

We show the print of the nails in our own hands when we prove honest and honorable in our dealings with others even at cost and loss to ourselves. Mr. Robert C. Ogden relates the following incident:

"I will tell you what I consider an example of business honesty. A friend of mine, who died not long ago, held securities of a certain railroad property. Shortly before his death some one told him, on unimpeachable authority, that the railroad was about to go to pieces, and that he had better unload the securities. But he refused to do it, for some one else would have been the loser. And he was not a man of means. Sure enough the railroad company went to pieces. It was put into the hands of a receiver, and my friend's securities were reduced to almost a nominal value."

"How can I learn the lesson?" some one



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asks. Christ will teach you. He says, "Come unto me, and learn of me." "The orange," says the Rev. W. L. Watkinson, "was originally a bitter berry, yet it has been transformed and transfigured into an apple of gold. And our poor, cold, selfish hearts are capable of being wonderfully ennobled and adorned by the riches of love, compassion, sympathy and bountifulness."



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# Influence



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*"If no man's memories not thy monument be*
*Thou shalt have none. Warm hearts, and not cold*
*stone,*
*Must mark thy grave, or thou shalt lie unknown.*
*Marbles keep not themselves; how then keep thee?"*

—JOHN VANCE CHENEY, in the *Century*.

*"Upon a closet shelf I have some things—*
*A tea set, dolls, a treasured book or so*
*That learn the years a fragrant memory brings*
*Of one dead long ago.*
*And at their touch I walk with springs flying;*
*From out the silence me is by my side,*
*A little maid whose hand has slipped from mine—*
*My childish self that died."*



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## CHAPTER EIGHT

# Influence

NE who knew the sage well said, "There is one quality I noticed in Emerson as more striking than in anyone else I ever saw, and that was the effect he had upon all who came into his presence. It seemed as if when a man had looked into his eyes, he was immediately put at his best, and acquitted himself on the highest plane possible." The personality of Emerson had in it a quality which inspired others to their best. An incident in the Acts tells us that in the early days of the church, in times of great blessing, people even carried out the sick into the streets, that as Peter came by, at the least his shadow might fall upon some of them. Of course this healing power in Peter's shadow was miraculous.

The incident, however, suggests something



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that is not miraculous. Everybody casts a shadow. Every one of us exerts some kind of unconscious influence over others. It may not always be a healing shadow, but it always makes an impression. Our influence is that which we unconsciously breathe out wherever we go. Whatever we do is made more important, or less, by our personality.

The shadow of Peter healed the sick on whom it fell. Every one of us has some influence. Either we will make those we touch better, nobler, truer, or we will leave them not so good. There is something almost startling in the thought that in every word we speak, in every deed we do, in every impression we leave, we are setting in motion an influence which shall go on forever.

We should make sure that the impression we make in the world shall always be good. We are meeting people all the while. Every touch we put upon their lives is for eternity. Will it be for beauty or for marring? George Macdonald tells of a boy looking intently, late one afternoon, toward the heavens. His



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mother asked him what he was thinking of so seriously, and he said, "I was wishing that I were a painter, that I might help God paint his clouds and sunsets." It was a beautiful wish. But God does not need us to help him paint his clouds. Instead, however, he has higher and nobler work for us to do. George Macdonald says again, "If I can put one touch of rosy sunset into the life of any man or woman, I shall feel that I have worked with God." Putting a touch of beauty on a soul is immortal work. Clouds vanish, but the impression put upon a life is forever.

Recently the papers told us that a distinguished artist in Paris had destroyed pictures of his own, worth a hundred thousand dollars, representing three years of labor, because he had come to believe that they were not worthy art. While preparing them for public exhibition he became discouraged with them. He said they were not fit to be passed on to posterity. So with a knife and a paint brush he destroyed them all. But we cannot do this with the pictures we paint on the



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canvas of people's lives. Think of a man of sixty-eight, looking back over his life, considering what he has done, noting carefully the impressions he has made on other lives, and finding that he has been doing harm, not good, all these years, that he has been leaving blots and stains on characters instead of marks of beauty, that he has been influencing others to choose the wrong instead of the right. Can he in his penitence and despair undo all this evil, or any of it? Can he cut these unworthy pictures from their frames, or dash and blot them with his brush? No; what he has done must stand—not a line can be changed. Think of the irretrievableness of the hurt you did yesterday to another, or the temptation coming through you which caused another to commit a sin. One told of a letter he had written which he would have given his right hand to get back, but he could not recall it. We should never forget that if our influence is evil, we never can undo it. If we say a false word about another, defaming him, we may put upon his name a stain which



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all the water of the ocean cannot wash off. One who by his example leads a young man to take his first drink, so that he becomes a drunkard, never can undo the evil. Pilate spoke more truly than he knew when he said, "What I have written I have written."

No one liveth unto himself. You cannot get away from your entanglements with people. You cannot live and not influence others. If you were on Selkirk's Island and were the only human being there, you might say you have no influence, that it is no matter what you do, how you live—no matter to anybody but yourself. But you are not thus living by yourself. People throng all about you. You are always touching other lives, either helpfully or hurtfully. Be sure you never give forth any influence that will harm any other, or start the least trace of evil in the world. A great author said, at the close of his life, that so far as he knew, he had never written in any of his books one sentence that he would wish to recall. That was a fine test of a life. There can be no higher ideal in living than



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that we may never do anything which, when we come to the end, we shall wish we had not done.

Have you ever thought how many of every day's acts are induced by other acts? One person does a kindness to some one in trouble, and another, two others, twenty others, are influenced by it to do similar kindnesses. A poor boy was drawing home one day a little wagon filled with pieces of broken boards which he had gathered about some building operation. He was tired, his feet were bare, his clothing was ragged, his face was pinched and pale, telling of poverty and hunger. The boy had stopped to rest and had gone asleep. His cap had fallen from his head and his face was exposed to the sun. Then an old man, carrying a wood saw, passing along, saw the boy, and a look of pity came into his face. Taking from his pail his own scanty dinner, he laid it down beside the lad and hurried away. Others saw the act. A man walked down from his house near by and laid a silver half dollar beside the workman's dinner. A



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woman, living across the street, brought a good cap. A child came running with a pair of shoes and another with a coat. Other persons stopped, whispered, dropped silver. So, from the old wood sawyer's one kindly act, there had gone out this wave of influence, leading a score or more of people to do likewise.

We never know what may be the effect of our simplest doing of our duty. One day Jesus had been praying apart. His disciples saw him and stood still in reverence. Something in his manner made them quiet and thoughtful. When he rose from his knees, they asked him to teach them to pray. It was the unconscious influence of his simple act that impressed them. One of Horace Bushnell's great sermons is on "Unconscious Influence." It is based on the incident of the resurrection morning, when Peter and John ran to the empty grave. John was younger than Peter, and fleeter of foot, and he outran the older man, but he stood there, awed and hesitating, not going into the tomb. Then Peter came



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up and at once went in. Dr. Bushnell's text is, "Then entered therefore the other disciple also." Peter is unconscious, as he comes up and goes straight in, that he is drawing in his brother apostle also. So is it continually in life. The bold unconsciously make the timid brave. One nervous, restless person in a home makes all the household nervous and restless. One quiet, restful person makes it easier for all the family to be at peace. One Christian who is never troubled diffuses confidence among all the company.

One night many years ago two young men were put into the same room in an English country inn. One of them was a heedless, thoughtless youth. The other, when the time for retiring came, quietly knelt down beside the bed and prayed in silence. His companion was strangely impressed. Fifty years afterward he wrote, "That scene, so unostentatious and so unconcealed, aroused my slumbering conscience, and sent an arrow into my heart." The result was the young man's conversion to God, followed by long years of



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service as a Christian minister and as a writer of books which have greatly blessed the world. "Nearly half a century has rolled away," he wrote again, "with its multitudinous events, but that old chamber, that humble couch, that silently praying youth, are still present to my imagination and will never be forgotten, even amid the splendors of heaven and through the ages of eternity."

It was but a lowly, simple act of common faithfulness, modest, with no desire to be seen, without thought of influence save as the prayer would bring down blessing upon his own soul; yet there went out from it a power which gave a noble Christian life to the world, and a long ministry of usefulness. Suppose that every young Christian shall be quietly and bravely faithful in every duty, in every place, this year, next year, all the years; think of the tremendous influence that such faithfulness will exert everywhere. It is not easy always. It is easy to stand up with a great company, touching arms and shoulders, and say, "I will never fail my Master in



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any place." When all are together, each makes the other strong. But to-morrow you may have to stand alone. Then it will not be easy. Yet it will be just as essential that you own Christ there. You will then be the only one he will have to stand for him and if you fail him, his cause will fail at that point.

It may be in the office, in the store, in the shop, in the school, on the playground. It may be in the way you endure a sneer, the way you do a simple task, the way you meet an opportunity to be dishonest, the way you meet a request to do some one a wrong act, the way you answer a slight. Once in Wellesley College a student was complaining bitterly to the president of a certain rudeness that had been shown to her. The president said, "Why not be superior to these things and let them go unregarded?" "Miss Freeman," retorted the student, "I wonder how you would like to be insulted." Miss Freeman drew herself up with fine dignity and said, "Miss S., there is no one living who could insult me." This was true. If any one had



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attempted to insult her, he would have found her altogether beyond his reach. No one ever could insult Jesus. Men might spit in his face, they might pluck out his beard, they might mock him, but they could not insult him. You cannot insult the stars by flinging mud at them. Our lives should be so independent of earthly conditions that no insult ever can reach us, hid as we are with Christ in God. So it may be in bearing scoffs, mockings, insults, that we will be called to be faithful. In whatever form the testing comes, be true, and fail not your Master.

Our influence is involuntary. We cannot make it what we want it to be by any planning or posing. It distils from our life as it is. It is our life that we need to watch, for our influence will always be a true and exact diffusion of the essential things in us. If we would have our influence fragrant and sweet, we need only to do always the things that please Christ.

Dr. W. L. Watkinson says: "Example that has no voice, the commonplace deed that



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secures no chronicle, the personal magnetism that defies analysis—these are the precious, silent forces making for righteousness. No philosophy can explain the mysterious elements of Christian influence; but such influence is the supreme force working in society for its purification and uplifting. Let us aim at the sincerest, deepest, purest personal life, and we shall bless the world more than we think; we shall, unperceived by ourselves, be enriching it all day long with the ethers of heaven."



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# Is God Always Kind?



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*"O pilgrim, as you journey, do you ever gladly say,*
*In spite of heavy burdens and the roughness of the way,*
*That it does not surely matter—all the strange and bitter stress;*
*Heat and cold, and toil and sorrow—'twill be healed with blessedness,*
*For the road leads home?"*

*"Is it raining, little flower?*
*Be glad of rain.*
*Too much sun would wither thee;*
*'Twill shine again.*
*The sky is very black, 'tis true;*
*But just behind it shines the blue.*

*"Art thou weary, tender heart?*
*Be glad of pain!*
*In sorrow sweetest things will grow,*
*As flowers in rain.*
*God watches; and thou wilt have the sun,*
*When clouds their perfect work have done."*

—Mary F. Butts.



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## CHAPTER NINE

# Is God Always Kind?

HE Bible takes especial pains to assure us of the everlastingness of God's love. In one passage, for example, it is declared that while even the mountains shall depart, God's loving-kindness shall never depart from his people. The word loving-kindness suggests all that is sweet, tender, and comforting in love. There are men who love and are not kind. They would give all they have to help a friend, and yet they lack gentleness. They are stern, severe, brusque. They have not a gracious manner. They are not kind. Kindness is love's best. It not only gives, but gives in a way that adds a hundredfold to the value of the gift.

Kindness in this passage is made still tenderer by the qualifying word loving—loving-kind-



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ness. There may be kindness that is not loving. It is a great comfort to know that God's power shall not depart, is eternal. Nothing ever can sweep away our refuge in the almighty strength of God.

*"God is our refuge and strength,*
*A very present help in trouble.*
*Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,*
*And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas."*

But power is cold—it lacks heart. The word loving-kindness means far more. It suggests affection, tenderness, all that is warmest, tenderest, and most comforting.

The assurance is that the loving-kindness of God shall not fail. There never will be a day or an hour when he will not be kind. Can he be a father and not be kind to his children? The Bible is full of the most exquisite revealings of God's kindness. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him." "As one whom his mother



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comforteth, so will I comfort thee." "The mountains may depart—but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee." It is also in the Old Testament that we find another exquisite picture of the divine loving-kindness. In his farewell address Moses said to his people, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." There is comfort in the embrace of a father's or a mother's arms. But we are not sure that we shall have these arms very long; no human arms are everlasting. The arms of God, however, will never unclasp their hold. Then they are ever underneath. We cannot fall out of their clasp. However low we may sink in weakness or in pain, these arms will always be underneath us.

Indeed it is only when the mountains do depart that we can know the best of the kindness of God. It is when father and mother are gone that the Lord takes us up into the closest, tenderest love. We need his love most then and the need enables us to find the blessing. In the days of earthly prosperity and gladness, when human love is about us with



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all its sweetness, tenderness, and satisfyingness, we do not find, do not realize, the best of God's loving-kindness. It is concealed in the fulness of human love and earthly blessing which we enjoy. It is only need that finds and reveals the best things. But when trouble comes and the earthly good things that have meant most to us are stripped off, then we find the infinite blessings of the divine kindness. We should never see the stars if the sun did not go down. We should never discover the grace and loving-kindness of God if there were never a break in our earthly joy. We should never know the wonder of God's comfort if we had no sorrow. It is when the visible mountains depart, and we have them no longer to hide in, that our hearts find the mountains of God, with their eternal refuges.

But does God's kindness never depart from us? Are there no days when he really is not kind to us? Are there no experiences in our lives when we can say, "God is not kind to me any more?" Such questions as these are



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continually asked by those who are in trouble or sorrow, those who have had great losses or bitter disappointments. "Where can you find the loving-kindness of God in my experiences of the past months?" one asks. We may not be able to interpret the meaning of these strange providences, which so often stagger the faith of earnest souls. We do know, however, that there never is a break in the divine loving even when our eyes can see no love.

We are sure, for example, that God knows all the things that try us. The prophet taunted the worshippers of Baal when, after calling upon their god all day, they got no answer, and said: "Cry aloud. Either he is musing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened." But there can be no such taunts concerning our God, for he is never absent when we call, nor asleep, needing to be awakened, nor ignorant of our condition, needing to be informed.

*"He knows the bitter, weary way:*
*He knows the endless striving, day by day,*
*The souls that weep, the souls that pray.*



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*"He knows how hard the fight hath been,*
*The clouds that come our lives between,*
*The wounds the world hath never seen.*

*"He knows when faint and worn we sink,*
*How deep the pain, how near the brink*
*Of dark despair we pause and shrink.*

*"He knows! Oh, thought so full of bliss,*
*For though our joy on earth we miss,*
*We still can bear it, feeling this—*
*He knows."*

Does he know all that we suffer, and yet send no relief? Does he know the wrongs his child is enduring and not interfere to check their continuance? Does he know the pain your friend is experiencing, hear the prayers that are made so agonizingly, and yet bring no help? Yes, he knows. The crippled girl in Ralph Connor's story could not understand how God could be good and let her suffer so. Her friend asked her about the plaster jacket the doctors had put on her.

"Did it hurt you when they put it on?"



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"It was awful," she replied, shuddering as she thought of it.

"What a pity your father wasn't there!" said her friend.

"Why, he was there."

"Your father there, and did not stop the doctors' hurting you so cruelly?"

"Why, he let them hurt me. It's going to help me, perhaps make me able to walk about some day."

"Oh, then they did not hurt you in cruelty, just because they wanted to? I mean that your father loves you, though he let you be hurt; or, rather, he let the doctors hurt you just because he loves you, and wants to make you well."

The girl became very thoughtful. Presently the light began to shine in her face. Then she asked, as the mystery of it all began to become clear to her, "Do you mean that though God let me fall and suffer so, he loves me?"

"Her friend nodded. Presently she said, as if to herself, "I wonder if that can be true."



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We are sure also that God could relieve us of the things that are so hard for us to bear —could, if he would. There is nothing that God could not do. Pilate boasted to Jesus that he had power to crucify him, or to release him, as he chose. "No," said Jesus; "thou canst have power over me only as it is given thee from above." This is God's world, and nothing can get out of God's hands. "My loving-kindness shall not depart from thee."

What, really, is God's loving-kindness? At first we may think it is only tenderness, that it is always pitiful and compassionate, that it cannot permit pain or suffering. But is that God's kindness? There are two ways of showing kindness. One is by being always tender and keeping our loved one from every roughness, every self-denial, by letting him always have his own way—that is what some people mean by kindness. Some parents show this sort of kindness to their children, denying them nothing, never restraining them, never permitting them to suffer anything that



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would give pain. The other sort of kindness thinks of the best things and seeks the good of the child, not merely his ease or pleasure.

Sometimes God lets us suffer, causes us to suffer. Is he then unkind? Does a loving parent never willingly let his child suffer? Your child is hurt, has a foot crushed under a carwheel on the street. The surgeons consider what should be done and decide that there must be an amputation, or the child's life cannot be saved. As the little one is carried to the operating room, would you begin to cry out that the doctors are unkind, cruel? Oh, no; it does not seem kindness to use the knife, but you know it would be most cruel unkindness not to do it in the circumstances.

When God says to you in the morning, "My loving-kindness shall not depart from you," he does not mean that you will have no suffering, no self-denial, no pain, no hardship; he means that the whole course of his treatment of you that day will be toward the fashion-



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ing of your life into Christlikeness, the training of your powers for usefulness. Sometimes he will let you suffer, perhaps torturingly, seeming to disregard your happiness. But it is just because he loves you that he does this. If he saved you from all suffering and pain, he would really be unkind. Some day you will understand that the truest kindness is always that which makes your life better, richer, nobler, and a greater blessing to the world.



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# Peril in Life's Changes



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*"There's a Something that maketh a palace*
*Out of four little walls and a prayer;*
*A Something that seeth a garden*
*In one little flower that is fair;*
*That tuneth two hearts to one purpose*
*And maketh one heart of two;*
*That smiles when the sky is a gray one*
*And smiles when the sky is blue.*

*"Without it no garden hath fragrance,*
*Tho' it holdeth the wide world's blooms;*
*Without it a palace a prison*
*With cells for banqueting rooms;*
*This Something that halloweth sorrow*
*And stealeth the sting from care;*
*This Something that maketh a palace*
*Out of four little walls and a prayer."*



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## CHAPTER TEN

# Peril in Life's Changes

HERE is always peril in change. The more suddenly the change comes, and the greater it is, the more is the danger that hurt will result. There is danger in the ordinary changes of life, from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood and womanhood. Many do not make the transition safely. There always are certain things that must be left behind as each period is abandoned for the one that succeeds it. The mother does not like to see her boy lose his curls and his boyish looks and ways. She wishes she could keep her baby always. But it would be a sad thing if he kept his childish manners, his immature development, his baby face and looks. This would be abnormal, an arrested growth, becoming a lasting grief. The transi-



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tion must be made, and there is not meant to be any loss in it, but rather a gain. As the blossom fades and falls off, but leaves its secret of life behind for the beginning of the fruit, so the change from boyhood is not intended to be the losing of anything, but an unfolding, a development. The true avails of childish sweetness and beauty stay in the heart and life of youth, and become its strength. The change is safely passed when the new emerges from the old in healthful grace and vigor.

But there is always danger in the transition, and not always is it safely passed. There is need of great wisdom in those who care for the child, for its education, for its health, for the directing of the influences which affect its growth. Many careers are wrecked in the early formative periods. It is the mission of the ideal home to be in every way a wholesome place for children to grow up in, a place of love, of joy and of cheer, not of over-kindness or over-indulgence, not of forcing processes or excessive stimulation, not of



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dulness, dreariness, or lack of vitalizing and energizing influences. The true education in this educational period is that which insures wholesome outcome, developing into richer, stronger, more beautiful life.

There is peril also in the changes that come through life's experiences. The impression prevails that pain and sorrow, for example, are always beneficent. It is admitted that there is danger in unbroken prosperity, in a life without cross or trial, but somehow it is widely felt or believed that trouble always brings blessing, that at least it is a safe condition, tending toward good. Yet there is peril also in suffering. It does not always make people better, sweeter in spirit, more patient, more heavenly minded. It is its mission to produce such results. There is a Beatitude for those that mourn. Tribulation is the way to the kingdom. The hard things of life are meant to be disciplinary. Earthly loss should bring us heavenly gain. Pain should sweeten our spirits. Disappointments should teach us to accept God's



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appointments. We should always be better for affliction.

But not always are we thus helped and made better by trial. Sickness sometimes makes people unhappy, discontented, impatient, exacting, selfish. Pain sometimes brings out not the best but the worst in one's nature. Some men and women are sorely hurt in their disposition by it. Loss sometimes proves loss indeed, leaving nothing in its place to supply the lack of that which is taken away. Grief makes some people hard and bitter. They refuse to submit to God when the cross is heavy and grow rebellious.

Thus the experience of trouble always has its perils. The deep waters of sorrow have their hidden rocks and there is no chart which marks them; those who pass over them need a wise and skilful Pilot. At no time do we need the divine guidance more than when we are passing through sore trials. The only safe way is to commit ourselves to the will of God and the heavenly guardianship. Then no trouble can harm us. The fiercest storms



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cannot injure us when we are beneath God's sheltering care.

"*God plants us where we grow.*
*It is not that because a bud is born*
*At a wild brier's end full in the wild beast's way,*
*We ought to pluck and put it out of reach on the oak tree-top.*"

An experience of change which has its peculiar perils is when one suddenly passes out of prosperous circumstances into poverty. Only the other day a little family entered an experience of this kind. They had been enjoying all the comforts of a beautiful home. Money was abundant. No want was ungratified. The father was in a successful business. The mother was carefully sheltered and free from care. The only daughter was at school in another city. The father, not content with a good, regular business, tried speculation—a temptation to whose fascination many men yield. For a time he was successful and his success lured him on. Failing in some ven-



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tures, he invested more, hoping to win back what he had lost, and lost more, until all was gone. The beautiful home had to be given up, pictures and furniture were sold, the daughter was recalled from school and began seeking a position in which she could become a bread-winner. The little family is living in a boarding-house, in pinching and uncongenial circumstances.

All this is pathetic enough, but this is not the worst of it. Many people are always poor, with experiences of want, self-denial and hardship all their days, and yet live sweetly, beautifully and nobly through it all. They have never known any other condition. The best things in their lives are the fruits of their privation, their toil, and their pressing need. But all is different with this family. In the past, until now, they had never had a wish denied them. They had always been used to luxury, never finding it necessary to go without anything they wanted, and this made it very hard for them to accept the bareness of their new condition. They had been accus-



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tomed to a good social position, and that is now gone—they have left their old neighborhood among well-to-do neighbors, and are staying on a very plain quiet street. People probably just as good as they are live all about them and are really quite happy, because they have always been familiar with poverty's cot and poverty's fare. There is no dishonor in living in such circumstances. God loves the poor, and it may be seen at the last that poverty has done more for the kingdom of Christ, for human happiness, and for the enriching of the world, than wealth has done.

*"Poverty bought our little lot,*
*Flooded with daisy blooms;*
*Poverty built our little cot,*
*And furnished all its rooms.*

*"Yet Peace leans over Labor's chair,*
*Joys at the fireside throng,*
*While up and down on Poverty's stair*
*Love sings the whole day long."*

But with this little family all is different—they have not been used to poverty—and the



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danger is that they will be hurt in the new experience. Their family life appears to be suffering. They are all discouraged and seem to be less joyous and less affectionate. The mother gives way to her feeling of discontent and she has not her old cheerfulness, courage and kindliness. The father has not proved himself brave and strong, but seems to have succumbed to defeat and goes about like a broken man. The daughter, unused to care, to responsibility, untrained for work and for endurance, finds it hard to face life as a working girl. She is willing enough, even eager to take up her burden, but she is unprepared for it, and it is not going to be easy for her to get the preparation, since she must begin at once to provide for herself and also do her share in providing for her family.

It is evident that there are dangers in this experience for this young girl as well as for the others of the family. It will not be easy for her to pass through it without losing something of the beauty, the gentleness, the



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simplicity, the charm of her life. The burden is too heavy for her young shoulders. The roughness of the world may hurt the bloom of her life and rob her of somewhat of the brightness of girlhood. It is a serious loss to her to have to give up her school life to become a bread-winner. It seems to be too great a sacrifice for her to be required to make. There is danger that she may lose heart, that her spirit may be broken and her life irreparably hurt.

The problem of passing through a change like this is a very serious one. There is great danger that harm shall result. It is possible, however, to meet the experience successfully. Burdens, if accepted cheerfully and borne heroically, become a help, not a hindrance. The trials of life all have in them their opportunity for learning new lessons, gaining new strength, reaching new heights. The effects upon us of the changes through which we pass depend upon ourselves. All life is meant to be disciplinary—it is God's intention that each event and experience shall



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make us better, more beautiful in character, fitter for the work of life. We are always at school. It is not the divine will that anything that comes into our life shall do us harm, shall spoil our life or prove a hindrance to our real progress. Flowers grow under the snow in the late winter, unhurt by the cold and the ice. The beautiful things of love should be kept gentle and lovely under the shelter of divine love, through even the hardest experiences. If only we meet the experiences of life as we may, however severe they may be in their natural consequences, they may be made into blessing and good. We need only to keep ourselves in the love of God and then no harm of any kind can come to us. "The highest joy is an *edelweiss*; it grows only bosomed in the snow and nursed by tempests. There is no joy like the divinely joyful sorrow, as there is no strength like the divinely strengthened weakness.

Every day brings its changes, its sudden trials and troubles, its losses, its disappointments, ofttimes its tragedies. It is well that



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we train ourselves to calmness and peace of mind, to self-control, so that we may never be swept away by the surprises of life and led to do rash and foolish things. The other day a family was startled to hear without warning that a son who was only a boy was married a week before to a girl of his own age. The first effect on all the household was consternation, which quickly passed into anger. Bitter words were spoken and there was danger that deeds of violence would be done, things for which the family would have grieved afterward. Then was the time when the soft answer that turneth away wrath was spoken, and peaceable counsel prevailed. There was danger of the wrecking of the happiness of the two young lives and the rending of the cordial relations in two families, with the starting of feuds and strifes which would have gone on for years. Happily, however, these perils were avoided. It is said that when a twig or even the smallest branch of a tree is bruised, all the tree begins to send of its life to heal the wound. Thus it



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was in these two homes. The folly of a hasty marriage was condoned and all the influence of the two families brought to bear to make the best of it. The young people were given every opportunity not only to be happy, but also to hold their place of love in the hearts of their respective households. There may still be regret at the hastiness of the marriage, but forgiveness will be full and complete, and unless further mistakes are made, all will go on happily.

The real problem of life is not to avoid hard and unpleasant experiences, surprises of sorrow, trying things, vicissitudes in circumstances, but in whatever changes or trials that may come, to be divinely led, preserved from mistakes and follies, guarded from evil in every form and brought into better, more beautiful life. Thus the changes that come will prove to be part of God's plan for our lives. The incidents of the common days will become links in the chain of providence. When we put our perplexing circumstances, whatever they are, into the hands of God,



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to be untangled by him and then ordered and directed in his wise way of love, we have nothing to do in the matter but our simple duty. We must keep our own hands off the tangles, believing that in God's own good time and in his own way he will bring about blessing, beauty and good.

*"I am glad to think*
*I am not bound to make the world go right:*
*But only to discover and to do*
*With cheerful heart the work that God appoints.*

*"I will trust in him*
*That he can hold his own; and I will take*
*His will, above the work he sendeth me,*
*To be my chiefest good."*



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# Helping by Prayer



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*"Lord, when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come!'*
*Then fold our hands without a care*
*For souls whom Thou hast died to save,*
*We do but mock Thee with our prayer.*

*"Thou couldst have sent an angel band*
*To call Thine erring children home;*
*And thus through heavenly ministries*
*On earth Thy kingdom might have come.*

*"But since to human hands like ours*
*Thou hast committed work divine,*
*Shall not our eager hearts make haste*
*To join their feeble powers with Thine?"*



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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Helping by Prayer

E are taught to pray for others. This is one of life's highest and plainest duties. St. Paul exhorts that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men. St. James exhorts us to pray one for another, adding that "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." Thus prayer is put down among the active, working forces of the world, one of the ways in which we can do good to others. It avails much in its working.

When we think of it carefully we shall find that there really is no way in which we can do so much for others as by praying for them. Prayer is not merely a heart sigh, an expression of well-wishing—it lays hold upon the hand of God and brings divine power to



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bear in helping and blessing those for whom we make intercession. There always are things which we can do for others with our own hands—we mock God when we try to put our duties off on him—but there are many things which we can do only by prayer.

Friendship is precious and sacred, but friendship that does not pray lacks a vital element. It leaves God out. A Christian young woman is loved by a man who laughs at prayer, and laughs at her because she believes in prayer. Is it any wonder that the young woman hesitates to intrust her life, with all the interests of her future, to one who, though she believes him to be true, honorable and worthy, yet cannot give her the help that can come only through a true friend's prayers? Earth's sweetest flowers need heaven's dew to make them perfect in beauty and fragrance. Earth's best things are incomplete without heaven's benedictions. Love needs divine strength and grace to make it complete. An old writer said, "Pray for whom thou lovest; thou wilt never have any comfort of his friendship for whom



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thou dost not pray." Then some one writes as a response to this counsel:

*"Yes, pray for whom thou lovest; if uncounted wealth were thine,*
*The treasures of the boundless deep, the riches of the mine,*
*Thou couldst not to thy cherished friends a gift so dear impart,*
*As the earnest benediction of a deeply prayerful heart."*

"Pray for whom thou lovest." Nothing else you may do for your friend can possibly mean so much. Our hands are awkward and unskilful. Ofttimes even in our best-meant efforts we only hurt the life we try to heal with our touch. At the best we are poor bunglers in helping others. We have no skill or wisdom to help in the deepest ways. We do the wrong thing. We lift away burdens it were better our friends should carry longer, for our burdens do not fall by accident upon our shoulders; they are God's gifts and bring blessings. We make the path easy when it were



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better it had been left rough. We hurry some providence to get the blessing to our friend sooner, and in doing this give him fruit yet unripe, which can only do him harm. It were better for him to wait longer and get the fruit mellow and ripe. How glad we should be that we can put our friends into God's hands when they have sorrows and need comforting, or are in difficulties, longing for deliverance, or have hard questions which they do not know how to answer.

It has been said that wrong advice has wrecked destinies. As experience increases and we learn more of the seriousness of living we shrink more and more, if we are wise, from giving advice. How do we know what our friends ought to do in this perplexity; which of two ways is the better way for them to take; how they can meet this emergency most wisely; whether they ought to accept or decline this friendship that is offered to them? We think of our friends in their troubles, sympathize with them and wish we could relieve them; but how do we know that relief



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from trouble would be best for them? We would not dare to take from them the cross they are bearing—how do we know that we would not be proving their worst enemy if we did? The cross is meant not to crush, but to lift. Almost the only safe thing our love can do is to ask God to do what he knows to be the best things for those he loves. Not to pray for them, but to try instead to do our own kindnesses for them, is to put our poor, ignorant, blundering help instead of God's wise and perfect help.

Failing to pray for our friends is therefore a sin against them. It is also a sin against God. The law of love requires us to think of others and to do as much for them as we would do for ourselves. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We understand this of deeds of kindness. But prayer is one of the duties of love, and we sin against our brother when we fail to pray for him. The mother who does for her child all that the tenderest human love can do and yet never prays for him, never seeks for him divine protection,



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guidance, blessing, is surely both wronging her child and sinning against God.

The duty of praying for others is clearly taught by Christ himself. It is woven into the whole of what is known as the Lord's Prayer. This prayer is addressed to "Our Father," not "My Father." It is not a prayer which we are to offer for ourselves alone. We may use it when we are alone, but we are not to think only of ourselves. We are to pray also for our Father's other children. "Give us this day our daily bread." We are not to think only of our own need—that would be most unchristian selfishness; we are to think of others as well. We are always in danger of narrowing our petitions to ourselves, and our own needs, while others' needs are crowded out. The last place in the world for selfishness is when we are bowing before God in prayer. Love should always then be at its best.

*"Bow thy head and pray*
*That while thy brother starves to-day*



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*Thou mayest not eat thy bread at ease;*
*Pray that no health or wealth or peace*
*May lull thy soul while the world lies*
*Suffering, and claims thy sacrifice."*

It is not enough to pray for our friends. Jesus teaches us that we are to love our enemies and be kind to those who are unkind to us. "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same?" The same teaching applies to prayer. It is not enough to pray for those who are grateful and kind to us, who pray for us, who do things for us. We may pray also for those who treat us badly.

There is much ingratitude in the world. After the greatest kindness shown by us, running sometimes through years, those who have received help from us may forget everything we have done, and return only neglect and even wrong for all our love and service of



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past years. What is our Christian duty to those who may thus have requited our kindness with unkindness? Have we a right to resent the evil we have received? Does the injustice done to us free us from the duty of love to those who have done the injustice? May we cease to pray for them? When met by such an experience of ingratitude, Samuel said to the people of Israel that he would be sinning against God if he ceased to pray for them after they had been so ungrateful to him.

This question may become real and practical any day to any of us. We may be treated unjustly by one to whom we have been a faithful friend for years. Will that absolve us from being kind any longer to the ungrateful person? No; Christian love is not to be affected by any treatment it may receive from others. The true patriot is to be loyal to his country even though the country has been ungrateful to him. The Christian in his private relations is never to let his heart become embittered by any injustice done to him.



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Sometimes beside the brackish sea you will find a spring of water gushing up, as sweet as any that bursts from the hillside. When the tide is low you dip up its clear water and drink it and it refreshes you. A few hours later you come again and find the tide covering the place, its bitter waters rolling over the spring; but in a little while you pass again, and now the tide has rolled out to sea. You find the spring again and its clear streams are pouring up as sweet as before, without a trace of the brackishness of the sea in which the spring has been folded so long. So should it be with the love of the Christian heart. No wrong, no ingratitude, no cruelty, should ever embitter it. We should never cease to pray for others because they have been unkind to us.

We have a very definite word of our Master's on this matter. Jesus knew that our hearts are apt to grow bitter against those who do not love us, and to show resentment to those who do us harm, and so he gave this commandment: "I say unto you, Love your



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enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." He gave the reason, too—"that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." That is the way our Father loves—he loves his enemies, he blesses those that curse him, he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. Therefore if any one is harming us, that is the very person Christ especially commands us to pray for to-day.

When you kneel at the close of the day to pray and when you name in intercession those who have shown you kindness, number with them all who during the day may have been unkind, any who have injured you or who have spoken falsely or bitterly of you. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you."



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# Being a Comfort to Others



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*"Afterwhile—and one intends*
*To be gentler to his friends—*
*To walk with them in the hush*
*Of still evenings, o'er the plush*
*Of home-leading fields, and stand*
*Long at parting, hand in hand:*
*One, in time, will joy to take*
*New resolves for some one's sake,*
*And wear them the look that lies*
*Clear and pure in other eyes—*
*He will soothe and reconcile*
*His own conscience—afterwhile."*

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.



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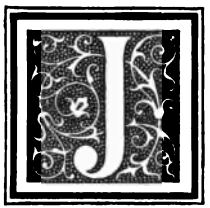
## CHAPTER TWELVE

# Being a Comfort to Others



UST after the death of Queen Victoria this beautiful story was told: She was visiting the wounded soldiers who had been brought back from South Africa. She was specially distressed by the suffering of one man who had been terribly hurt.

"Is there nothing that I can do for you?" asked the Queen.

The soldier replied, "Nothing, your Majesty, unless you would thank my nurse for her great kindness to me."

The Queen turned to the nurse, and said, with tears in her eyes, "I do thank you with all my heart for your kindness to this poor wounded son of mine."

There was something exquisitely beautiful in the soldier's unselfish thought of the nurse



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who had been such a comfort to him in his sufferings. His gratitude was so great that he sought even the Queen's honoring rather for her than for himself.

There is a beautiful charm in such self-forgetfulness as this, such entire elimination of one's self in thinking of others. There are those who reach this rare beauty of spirit. There are mothers who live for their children so utterly that they seek only their good, their happiness, never asking anything for themselves, never sparing themselves any cost or sacrifice to serve them. There is in many a home an unmarried sister who devotes herself to the comfort and good of the other members of her household with complete unselfishness, ministering to them in countless ways, with never a thought of rest, ease, or advantage for herself. Then, outside the circle of home, where we seem to have a right to expect service of love, there are those who live to do good, to give cheer, to be a comfort to others.

There really is no higher reach in life than



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that of being a blessing to others in one's own place. Every noble-spirited young person is ambitious to live well and helpfully, to do something worth while. But not all the really heroic things bring fame in this world. One may be a hero in God's sight and yet never hear a huzza from any human lips. When the country needed defenders, one boy entered the service, fought bravely, rose to honor, and returned, when the war was over, with high rank. He was greeted as a hero. His younger brother had stayed at home caring for his widowed mother and the little children—only a common farmer, without fame. But with God he was no less a hero than the other.

Then it is not only what we do, but even more what we are, that makes our lives count in their helpfulness and their capacity for giving pleasure to others. Some people are full of activity, even of eager helpfulness, and yet they are not always a comfort to their fellows. They have faults which mar the charm and the influence of their personality



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—dead flies which cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odor. They are not sweet, they lack humility, they are not really unselfish. People do not go to them with their perplexities and sorrows—there is in them something which hinders the outflow of confidence. One said, speaking of another, "He is one of the best men in the world, and is always offering his help, but somehow I could never go to him with my questions or with a sorrow." There is something in certain people's religion which mars its beauty. If we would be a comfort to others, our lives must be rich in lovingness. A mother said of her daughter, "She makes a beautiful climate for me." That is what we should make for the people who live near to us.

In one of his epistles St. Paul speaks of certain of his friends as "men that have been a comfort unto me." He was in prison, and in his loneliness these men had cheered and strengthened him. They had been kind to him, and their kindness had comforted him.



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He mentions by name three men who had specially helped him in this way. The first was Aristarchus, whom he calls "my fellow-prisoner." Perhaps he voluntarily stayed with the old minister in prison. No doubt he showed his love in many ways. Some one has defined a friend as "the person who comes in when all the world has gone out." That is what Aristarchus had been to Paul.

Another who had been a comfort to him was Mark. We are glad to have St. Paul write this, for many years before Mark had failed him, and the apostle would not trust him again. It is pleasant to know that Mark lived long enough and well enough to win again his old friend's confidence and affection.

There is another name in this list of honor—"Jesus that is called Justus." Not a hint is given of the way he had been a comfort to the apostle. Perhaps he had just been kind to him, doing nothing that could be written down, and yet no doubt his life was full of little gentle ministries that helped St. Paul



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more bravely and cheerfully to endure his chain. At least this man had been his friend, and just being a friend when one needs friends is something gloriously worth while. Some one has said, "The greatest thing that a man can do for his Heavenly Father is to be kind to some of the Father's other children."

The friends that St. Paul names were a comfort to him because they sympathized with him with a sympathy that was not obtrusive, not officious, not always reminding him of his chain and prison, but that manifested itself in quiet, unostentatious, inspiring ways. The word comfort is from a root which means to strengthen. It is like our noun cordial, in its old sense, something that invigorates, exhilarates; something that stimulates the circulation, making the pulses quicker, the life fuller. St. Paul's friends were a cordial to him, not lessening his sufferings nor lightening his burdens, but making him braver and stronger for endurance. They were a comfort to him.



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St. Paul himself was a wonderful example of a man who was a comfort to others. What his life, with its rich fulness and its genius for friendship, must have been to those who came into personal companionship with him! What a privilege it was to his fellow-craftsmen to have him working with them at their tent-making! His presence must have made the work seem lighter and the atmosphere of the shop brighter. We do not begin to realize what it means to us to live with certain people, to have them for friends, to drink from the fulness of their life. Harriet Prescott Spofford wrote of Phillips Brooks, after his death:

"*Perhaps we did not know how much of God*
*Was walking with us.*
*Surely not forlorn*
*Are men, when such great overflow of heaven*
*Brings down the light of the eternal morn*
*Into the earth's deep shadows, where they plod,*
*The slaves of sorrow.*"

Men did not know how much of God was walking with them when they had St. Paul



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for companion, friend, teacher. The more closely we study his life and his words the more do we find in him and in his teachings of love, of the delicate refinements of love, of all gentleness and kindness. The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is matchless as a picture. It is like a dream in its beauty. But it was a dream which was realized in the writer's own life. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not—doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil." Some people praise this wonderful picture of love, but do not think of living it. What a comfort we would be to each other if we really lived in all our common days the teaching of this great chapter!

Some people have love in their hearts, while in disposition, in speech, in expression, they lack lovingness. St. Paul teaches us not only to have a kindly heart, but a gracious manner. In his epistles he exhorts to the rarest delicacy of courtesy. Perhaps we do not give sufficient emphasis to this phase of Christian



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culture. We condemn lying, as well we may, but we forget that rudeness is a sin, too, as are also thoughtlessness, discourtesy, censoriousness, sharpness in speech or tone. St. Paul names "whatsoever things are lovely" among the ideal qualities of Christian character. Our religion should be beautiful, winning. We are to please others for their good, to edification.

Those who live thus gently, thoughtfully, beautifully, will always be a comfort to others with whom they live. A pastor was commending religion to a boy, expressing the hope that he would give his heart to God in his youth. "Religion is a continual joy," he said. "Look at your sister, Sarah. How much that dear girl enjoys her religion!" "Yes," drawled the boy, with frank candor, "Sade may enjoy her religion, but nobody else in the house enjoys it." The boy's judgment may have been harsh and unjust, but there are professing Christians of whom it is true that their families do not enjoy their religion. It is not sweet. It is not a comfort to



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people. It is critical, rasping, censorious, exacting. It was a serious condemnation of this girl's religion that her family did not enjoy it.

A close observer has said that "Many a sister spoils her testimony in the church by her tongue in the kitchen." Another has said, "There are people who lead us heavenward, but stick pins in us all the way." In a conversation overheard on a railway train, one reports catching this fragment of talk: "Yes, I suppose she's good—I know she is. But she isn't pleasant to live with." A goodness that isn't pleasant to live with is not the kind that is most needed in this world. We may do all our duties faithfully, conscientiously, bearing our share of the burdens and cares, and yet if we are not pleasant to live with, we fail in the most essential quality of love. An unlovely spirit, frowns and chilling looks, sharp, impatient words, over-balance the eager, painstaking service that does so much to help in practical ways. What the person is mars the value of what he does.



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## Being a Comfort to Others

After all, being "pleasant to live with" is one of the final tests of Christlikeness in life. You are careful never to fail to do all the little things of duty. Your friends can never say that you are inattentive to them, that you leave undone the kindly deeds of neighborliness or even brotherliness. But if, meanwhile, you are not pleasant to live with, is there not something lacking? The ideal religious life is one that is a comfort to others as well as a help. It is gracious and winning in its spirit. It is a blessing to all it touches. It makes one a comfort not only in his own home, where even his dog has a better time because the master is a "Jesus Christian," but also in his church, among his neighbors, in the office or shop where he works. Then, withal, it makes him pleasant to live with.

This word of St. Paul's really tests the Christian life of every one of us. Are we a comfort to people? Are the boys and girls a comfort to their mothers and fathers? or do they vex them, fret them, keep them awake at night with anxiety? Are husbands and wives a real



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comfort to each other? Are we a comfort to our neighbors, kindly, thoughtful, obliging, ready always to be helpful and gracious? It has been named as the mark of a gentleman that he never gives pain to another. An English poet called Jesus "the first true gentleman who ever breathed." He never gave pain to any one. Love characterized him in all circumstances and experiences. Even when he was being betrayed, he was still the refined gentleman. When he was being nailed to the cross he prayed for his executioners. Love never failed in him. He was always a comfort to others.

We as Christ's followers should be so full of his spirit, have our lives so permeated with his grace, love, and meekness, that we shall be a comfort to all men, and, above all, shall be a comfort to God.



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# Nevertheless Afterward



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*"If we could see beyond to-day*
*As God can see;*
*If all the clouds should roll away,*
*The shadows flee—*
*O'er present griefs we would not fret,*
*Each sorrow we would soon forget,*
*For many joys are waiting yet*
*For you and me.*

*"If we could see, if we could know,*
*We often say!*
*But God in love a veil doth throw*
*Across our way;*
*We cannot see what lies before,*
*And so we cling to him the more.*
*He leads us till this life is o'er;*
*Trust and obey."*



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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# Nevertheless Afterward

THINGS are not finished as we see them to-day. To-morrow they will appear larger, greater. The bud you see one morning in the garden will be a full-blown rose in a little while. The brown seed you dropped in your window-box will be a beautiful plant by and by. Wherever there is life there is growth. Every act has its consequences. We cannot foretell what results shall follow from any choice we may make. We must always take account of the afterward, whatever it is we are doing, through whatever experiences we are passing.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has a suggestive passage about chastening. He quotes from the Book of Proverbs: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son,



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despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." People sometimes chafe when they have troubles. They fret and blame God. "What have I done," they ask, "that God is punishing me so?" But God may not be punishing them at all. Chastening is not punishing. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby." The present is hard and painful, but there will be an "afterward." Chastening now; afterward, peaceable fruit.

The figure of pruning is used by our Master. He tells us that every fruitful branch of the vine the wise husbandman prunes—the fruitful, not the unfruitful, branch. It is a wonderful comfort to suffering Christians to know that pruning is therefore really a mark of approval. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." There is a purpose also in the



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pruning. It is not any reckless trimming—the husbandman knows what he is doing. Pruning seems destructive. Sometimes it appears as if the whole vine is being cut away. But there is an afterward—that it may bear more fruit.

One tells of a visit to a great hot-house, filled with wonderful clusters of luscious grapes. The owner said, "When my new gardener came, he said he would have nothing to do with these vines unless he could cut them clear down to the stock; and he did, and we had no grapes for two years. But this is the result." Stems and branches cut, bleeding, almost destroyed; afterward, a marvellous vine bending under its load of fruit.

It is only when we learn the truth about life that we are able to live with faith and courage. Because they have not learned it, many people fall into despair in the midst of present disappointments and sufferings. They see only the hard things in their circumstances, and pains that make the days almost unbearable, the wrongs and injustices that are



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crushing them. They stand right in the midst of all the bitter trials and see no light, no hope, no comfort. We need to learn to stand away from the immediate present and get a view of the experience from a remoter distance. We see only part of the experience while we are in its midst.

A visitor to Amsterdam had heard about the wonderful chimes of St. Nicholas—so the story runs. He was told that he must hear them, whatever else he might miss in the old Dutch city. The tourist did not know how best to hear the chimes, so he went up into the tower of the church to get as close as he could to the bells. He thought he would thus be best able to get the full benefit of his visit. There he found a man with great wooden gloves, like hammers, pounding on a keyboard. All he could hear was the crash of the keys, the harsh clanging and the deafening noise of the bells above his head. He wondered why his friends had talked so enthusiastically of the chimes of St. Nicholas. To his ears there was no music in them, nothing but ter-



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rible clatter and clangor. Yet at that very time there floated over and beyond the city the most entrancing music. Men in the fields a mile or more away paused in their work to listen. People in their homes and travellers on the highways were thrilled by the marvellous notes that fell from the tower. The place to listen to chimes is not close to them, but a distance away, where the clangor has softened into sweet music.

So it is with the experiences of life. When we are in their midst we hear only the jarring notes of pain, the bitter cries of suffering. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous." We are too close to it yet. But when we get farther away, when the sharpness of the pain is past, when the hardness is over and forgotten, the music grows sweet. Not until afterward comes with its comfort, its alleviation, its peaceable fruit, its new blessing, do we begin to understand the meaning of the discipline of the experience that was so hard. Afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit.



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It is only afterward that the meaning of many of God's providences can be clearly read. Now we see through a glass darkly; afterward we shall see face to face. Now we know in part; afterward we shall know fully. The things we think destructive and calamitous are blessings yet in their first stage, fruits still green and bitter, not yet ripened and mellowed.

"*Then be content, poor heart;*
*God's plans like lilies pure and white unfold.*
*We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,*
*Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.*
*And if, through patient toil, we reach the land*
*Where tired feet, with sandals loosed, may rest,*
*When we shall clearly see and understand,*
*I know that we will say, 'God knew the best.'*"

Life is a school. All its experiences are lessons. God is educating us. School is not easy. All true education looks to the building of the finest, noblest character in the end. It is especially so in God's school, for he is the perfect Teacher. His purpose is not to give



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us an easy time at present, but to make something of us afterward. Sometimes we chafe and fret, saying that God is harsh and severe, perhaps that he is even unkind. We cannot see that good ever can come out of the painful discipline. But there are lives which only in the school of severity can ever reach their best.

There are some plants that would die in the warmth of a conservatory. They must be kept in the cold if they would live and grow. One of the papers not long since told of a strange plant recently discovered in northern Siberia. It shoots up out of the ice and frozen ground. Its leaves grow on the side of the stem toward the north. Each leaf appears to be covered with little crystals of snow. On the third day the extremities of the anthers show minute glistening specks like diamonds. These are the seeds.

Is not this plant an illustration of many Christian lives? God seems to set them in beds of ice and snow, and yet they grow up out of the wintry cold into fair and wondrous



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beauty. We should say that the loveliest lives of earth would be those that are reared amid the kindliest influences, under summer skies, in the warm atmosphere of ease and comfort. But the truth is that many of the noblest developments of Christian character come from the wintry gardens of hardship, struggle, and sorrow. Trial, therefore, is not something meant to discourage us, to stunt and dwarf our life and mar its beauty. The snow plant would die in a tropical garden. There are lives that never could become Christlike and never could reach heaven without the discipline of hardness. No hardness is too severe which teaches us to live worthily. "To serve God and love him," says some one, "is higher and better than happiness, though it be with wounded feet, bleeding hands, and heart loaded with sorrow."

*"So much we miss*
*If love is weak; so much we gain*
*If love is strong. God thinks no pain*
*Too sharp or lasting to ordain*
*To teach us this."*



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We must guard against the dreading of the cost of life's best things. If we cannot pay the price we cannot get the blessings. We must have the sharp, biting winter if we would get, by and by, the genial spring with its bursting blossoms. We must have the ploughshare cutting through the ground if we would have the harvest of golden grain. There is no trial in our lives that does not come to us as the bearer of good. We meet a grievous loss when we are not profited by the hard or painful experience that comes to us. We cannot see this to-day. It seems to us in the keenness of our sorrow that nothing which may come in any afterward will make up for what we are now suffering. But if not in this life, then somewhere in the great eternal afterward we shall be able to say: "Now I understand." "All chastening seemeth for the present grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit."

Remember Joseph. He was cruelly wronged by his brothers, torn away from his home, sold as a slave, maligned and cast into chains



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—a dark beginning, surely, for a young man's life. Yet afterward came honor, power, glory. It takes time to work out God's best things. There is a story of a rabbi who met a child carrying a basket closely covered. "Tell me, little maid," said the rabbi, "what you have in that basket." The child answered, "If my mother had wished that any one should know what is in this basket, she would not have covered it up." If God had meant us to know all his plans of love for us, he would not have covered them up under experiences of pain and suffering. We may be sure, however, that for all our times of chastening and trial there is an afterward, full of glorious good, waiting for us.

We miss a great deal by living so entirely in the present and not having ourselves to think of the afterward. We are alarmed when we find ourselves in hard conditions and circumstances, forgetting altogether that these are only processes through which we must pass to reach fineness of character, sweetness of spirit, strength, courage, discipline, and all



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the qualities which go to make up the best life. We are too short-sighted when we are in trouble. We see only the suffering, the loss, the struggle, and think not of the mission of the trouble and what is coming out of it. We should widen our vision so as to take in the afterward as well as the present hour.

Life is all one piece. One experience follows another. God always loves us—loves us just as surely and as tenderly, when all things seem to be against us as he does when all things seem to be favoring us. When trouble comes, no matter what its direct and natural cause, it has a mission—it comes to make us better, to cure us of some fault, to cleanse us of some blot, to make us gentler, to teach us to be trustful and strong, to make us more thoughtful and more helpful. Instead of vexing and fretting ourselves with the question how God can truly love us and yet allow us to suffer, to endure loss, to be treated unjustly and wrongfully, we would better change our attitude altogether toward our



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trials and ask rather what errand this pain or affliction has for us, what it should teach us, what change it should work in us.

There is no trial in our lives that does not come to us as the bearer of a blessing. We meet a grievous loss when we are not profited by any hard or painful experience that comes to us. The other morning one told of an unhappiness which came from the loss of a friend—not by death, but by the friend's unfaithfulness. Well, it is hard when one has to lose out of one's life such a friend, who for years has seemed to be true and whose friendship has come to mean so much of strength, of companionship, of joy; but there will be an afterward, and we may be sure that when the afterward has opened its treasures into the lonely life, it will be seen that God is good and loving in just what he did. You do not know what poison was hidden in the cup you thought was filled to the brim with happiness. God took it out of your hand to save you from a deeper, bitterer sorrow than that which you are now enduring.



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## Nevertheless Afterward

You cannot see this to-day. It seems to you in the keenness of your sorrow that nothing that may come in afterward will make up for what you have lost. But trust God with that. The future is long. It stretches away into the eternal years. If not in this life, then somewhere in the great eternal Afterward you will be able to say: "Now I understand."

*"When the last day is ended,*
*And the nights are through;*
*When the last sun is buried*
*In its grave of blue;*

*"When the stars are snuffed like candles,*
*And the seas no longer fret,*
*When the winds unlearn their cunning,*
*And the storms forget;*

*"When the last lip is palsied,*
*And the last prayer said,*
*Love shall reign immortal*
*While the worlds lie dead!"*



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# The School of Life



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*"I do not ask for place among*
*Great thinkers who have taught and sung,*
*And scorned to bend*
*Under the trifles of the hour—*
*I only would not lose the power*
*To comprehend."*

*These lessons thou dost give*
*To teach me how to live,*
*To do, to bear,*
*To get, to share,*
*To work and play,*
*And trust alway.*

—MALTIE D. BABCOCK.



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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# The School of Life

THE business of life is learning. We know nothing when we begin. On the tomb of an English historian is the inscription, "He died learning." Learning is not confined to what we get from reading books. All life is a school and books are ever being put into our hands, and lessons are set for us continually.

St. Paul tells us of one of the lessons he had learned in the school of experience. "I have learned," he said, "in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." We are glad to know that St. Paul had to learn to be contented. We are apt to get the impression that such a man as he was did not have to learn to live as common people do, that he always knew, for instance, how to be contented. Here, however, we have the confession that he had to



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learn the lesson just as we do. He did not always know the secret. Then he was well on in years when he said this, from which we conclude that it took him a good while to learn the lesson, and that it was not easy for him to do it.

There is a remarkable word in the Hebrews which tells us that even Jesus learned his lessons as we must do—he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. It was not always easy for him to do the Father's will. Even in Gethsemane we see him learning. Each time he prayed that the cup might pass the pleading was a little less intense and it was growing easier for him to submit. The fact of the truth and reality of his humanity shows us that even Christ, the Son of God, had to learn the lessons of life just as his followers must do. He learned to be content in whatsoever state he was. He learned to be patient, to suffer injustice and wrong, to endure insults and not resent them. He learned to give up, to accept unkindness quietly and return kindness instead.



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# The School of Life

We are all in Christ's school. Disciples are scholars and we are all disciples. We enter the lowest grade when we begin to be Christians. We have everything to learn. Each new experience is a new lesson set for us by the great Teacher. There will come to you tomorrow a sharp temptation. You wonder why God permits it if he loves you. Why does he let you be assailed and put to the test? He certainly does not want you to fail. Satan's purpose in bringing temptation upon us is to entice us to sin, to disobey Christ and prove disloyal to him; but that is not God's thought in permitting us to be tempted. He means the temptation to prove us and then to strengthen us and fit us for braver, better life.

It seems strange to us that Jesus had to be tempted, he of the pure soul and the sinless life. But we know that a large element in his helpfulness as our Saviour and Friend comes from his own experience of temptation. We know that he is able to help us, and deliver us in our temptations because he was tempted



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and was victorious. If he had been defeated he could not have helped us. He is able also to sympathize with us in our struggles because he endured the same. In like manner temptation met and overcome makes our lives mean more to others. One who by God's grace has kept himself unspotted from the world becomes thus a comfort and a strength to many others. One writes:

"*Sometimes the world seems black with shade and dole—*
*The grimy haunt of sin-smirched evil men;*
*Then shines the unstained whiteness of your soul,*
*And all the earth is clean and fair again.*"

One brave and valiant soul that is not smirched by the world's evil and does not fail in the testing becomes indeed a strength to many others. He has not failed and we need not fail. For others' sake, as well as for our own, we should stand firm and true in every experience of testing. If we falter and fail, others are made less strong to endure. One



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courageous man who never turns back to the foe puts courage into others and they grow strong, too. But one faint heart puts fear and dismay into many other hearts. Remembering that others will do what we do, be brave and victorious, or craven and defeated, should be in us a mighty motive to stand. Then we need not fail. We may win in the battle. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear." Each temptation is a lesson set for us by the Master, and the lesson is never too hard to learn with his help.

Sorrow is also a lesson in Christ's school. It is not an accident breaking into our life without meaning or purpose. God could prevent the coming of the sorrow if he desired. He has all power, and nothing can touch the life of any of his children unless he is willing. Since we know that God loves us and yet permits us to suffer, we may be quite sure that there is a blessing, something good, in whatever it is that brings us pain or grief. We have this in the Master's Beatitude, "Blessed



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are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." The child of a patriotic soldier had been listening to his father as he told of a great battle in which he had been engaged. As the soldier spoke of the terrific struggle the boy said, "I would have run." The father replied, "Ah, there are some things, my son, dearer than life." The cause of country was dearer to the soldier. We shrink from pain. We would run away from grief. We would refuse to accept sorrow. But there are things worth suffering for, things dearer than ease and pleasure. We learn lessons in pain which repay a thousand times the cost of our tears. Suffering is hard, grief is bitter.

To some people it seems almost cruel in Jesus Christ to say, "Blessed are they that mourn." How could he say it, they ask, if his heart is tender and loving as we claim it is? How can God permit such suffering and woe, so much grief and sorrow, as we see everywhere, if he is a God of love and of compassion as he says he is?

"If I were God," said one, "I would take



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away all pain, all grief, all suffering from the world." That is just what God is doing through the gospel of his grace and love. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes." But we must not forget what it costs to do this. Jesus wept that our tears may be dried.

"It seems to me," said another, "that if God is the compassionate being the Bible says he is, his heart would break as he looks down upon the world and beholds the pain and anguish, the injustice and wrong, which are everywhere." The answer is, "His heart did break." That is the meaning of the cross. From God's own sorrow comes blessing for the world and comfort for all sorrow.

Jesus does not say that mourning itself is blessed, is good or pleasant or beautiful. What he says is that the comfort of God is blessed, that those who mourn and receive comfort are so enriched, their lives so enlarged, so lifted up into the blessing of God's love, that they can rejoice even in their tears. A young man who for fourteen years has



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had a great sorrow in his home—his wife being an incurable sufferer—speaks of the hard years bravely and joyfully, without a word or a tone of bitterness, testifying that he owes to the burden and sorrow of these years all that is worthy and beautiful in his life. Whatever he is as a man, especially as a Christian man, is the fruit of what he has suffered. He can say that he has learned to rejoice in his pain and trial. He accepted the lesson set for him and has learned it.

An ingenious photographer has been photographing the heart of a dried teardrop, under a microscope, revealing in it myriads of forms of beauty. The Bible tells us that God preserves the tears of his children, putting them in his tear-bottle. Tears are sacred to God, because of the blessings that come through them to those who love God. In heaven those who look back on lives of pain and sorrow on the earth will find that their best lessons have come through tears.

All the Christian graces have to be learned in Christ's school. There St. Paul had learned



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contentment. He never would have learned it, however, if he had had only bounty and ease all the while. Contentment comes from learning to do without things we once supposed to be essential to our comfort. St. Paul had learned contentment through finding such fulness of blessing in Christ that he did not need any more the secondary things. Perhaps we would succeed better in learning this same grace if we had fewer of life's comforts, if sometimes we had experience of want. The continuity of blessings that flow like a river into our lives gives us no opportunity to learn contentment. We think we are very happy and grateful for our favors; but how would we behave if instead of the unbroken supply of pleasant things, we were to suffer without them for a few days; if for our splendid health we fell sick for a while; if for the happy circle of love and the sweetness of unfailing joy, sorrow came and we were bereft and lonely? Perhaps it is well that we have some dark days, that we may learn to appreciate the blue sky. There are beautiful



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things in the darkness which we never would see if there were no break in the sunshine. When sufferings come into our life, disagreeable things, hunger, want, instead of plenty, rough ways instead of flower-strewn paths, God is teaching us the lesson of contentment so that we can say at length that we have learned it.

Patience is another lesson set for us in life's school. Many of us are impatient with others. We are impatient with their slowness in learning. An English head-master used to tell how once he sharply reproved a pupil for dulness when he failed to know his lesson. The boy looked up into the teacher's face and said, conscious of the injustice he was enduring: "Why do you speak so severely to me? Indeed, sir, I am doing the very best I can." The teacher used to tell years afterward how he always had regretted his loss of patience with that boy. Great wrong is often done a child by impatience in reproving him. We should remember that it was an outbreak of impatience that kept Moses out of the prom-



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ised land. We do not know how often impatience limits our usefulness.

Impatience is often shown in hasty temper. Ruskin in a letter to girls has this good advice: "Keep sweetly calm of temper under all circumstances, recognizing the thing that is provoking or disagreeable to you as coming directly from Christ's hand. And the more it is like to provoke you thank him for it the more, as a young soldier would thank his general for trusting him with a hard place to hold on the rampart." We should always remember that when we are disposed to become vexed, to fly into a passion, to speak harshly or pettishly, a lesson has been set for us—we are to learn to keep sweet, to endure patiently. The fact that we are inclined to become impatient shows that we have not yet fully learned our lesson, and therefore it is set for us again.

Lessons are also set for us when we are sick. The doctor sends you to your room and bids you to be quiet for a season. This means a good deal more than merely being sick. Your



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sickness has some mission for you. If your minister or your friends pray for you, there are two requests they should make. One is, that you may recover in God's good time, but the still more important prayer is that the mission of the sickness may not fail, that you may come from your sick-room in due time with a new blessing in your life. When you are sick, you should ask God what the mission of your illness is to you and then ask him to teach you the lesson set for you. It is not accidental. Nor does it come purposeless. It would be a sad thing if you should get over your fever and miss the lesson which the fever was sent to teach you, or the good it came to work in you.

It gives life a new sacredness to think of it thus as a school, the school of Christ. The Master is always saying to us, "Come unto me, and learn of me." Are we learning? Some men set for themselves the rule to learn some new fact every day. Goethe says we ought every day to see at least one fine work of art, to hear one sweet strain of music, to read



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one beautiful poem. Are we learning something new in Christ's school each day? Are we adding a line of beauty every day to our character?



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# Words of Life



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*"Wisdom with its trumpet word*
*In a myriad volumes heard;*
*All which unto love belongs*
*Chanted in uncounted songs,*
*Up and down the endless ages;*
*Things divine in sacred pages—*
*As the sands of the sea-shore—*
*Taught with tongues of gold of yore;—*
*When to-morrow is to-day,*
*What can still remain to say?*
*One thing looked for—one unheard,*
*Only that unuttered word,*
*Echoes of the sense of which*
*All our spoken words enrich,*
*And shall yet, with clarion call,*
*Alter and transmute them all."*



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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# Words of Life

HE words of Christ are not like other men's words. He says they are spirit and life. In one of his parables he speaks of his words as seeds. We know what seeds are. You may have in your hand a handful of gems—pearls, diamonds, or other precious stones. They are brilliant and beautiful. They are rare and of great value. You hold a fortune in your hand. But these are only little stones. They have no life in them. You may plant them in your garden, but they will not grow, and you will not gather any harvest from them.

Then you may take up a handful of seeds—flower-seeds, grain-seeds, seeds of trees. They have no brightness, do not shine, cannot be sold for ornaments. But they have secrets of life in them. Scatter them in your garden,



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drop them in your window-box, or plant them in the fields, and they will grow. Christ's words are seeds. They are different from other men's sayings. These may be eloquent, brilliant, wise, sparkling with beauty —gems of literature, but they have no life in them. They do not make the world any better. But the words of Christ are life. Plant them and you will have regenerated lives, sweet homes, grace and beauty in character.

It is related that when Thorwaldsen carried back from Italy the wonderful pieces of statuary which he had carved in that sunny land, the stones were wrapped in straw. They were unwrapped in the artist's garden, and the straw was scattered all about the place. Next summer, when the warm rains came, there grew up everywhere countless multitudes of flowers that never had grown there before. The seeds had been in the straw that was wrapped about the pieces of marble, and now in far-north Denmark, Italian flowers grew in great profusion and beauty.



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# Words of Life

The Bible is the word of God. It comes to us from heaven. It bears in itself heavenly seeds, seeds of the plants and trees that grow in the heavenly fields and gardens. Then, wherever the Bible is read it scatters these holy seeds, and soon the heavenly flowers and fruits are found growing on earthly soil. No other book has such power to transform and beautify lives as has the Bible. You may study the best literature, the finest poetry, the noblest philosophy; it will make you intelligent, cultured, learned, but it does not make you good; it does not put into your heart heavenly qualities; it does not make you loving, unselfish, kind, gentle; it does not send you forth to minister to others in need. But those who study the word of God daily, continuously, reverently, prayerfully, and meditate on its teachings, are transformed in character. The words that Jesus spoke are spirit and are life.

One of the Psalms gives us a wonderful picture of the effects wrought by the word of God. It finds the soul marred, stained, hurt,



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and restores it unto the beauty of God. It makes the simple wise. It puts joy into the heart. It enlightens the eyes. It is more precious than finest gold. It is sweeter than the droppings of the honeycomb. It warns against dangers. There is great reward in obeying it.

The Bible is the most wonderful of all books. All we know about God we learn from it. Yet some people seem almost ashamed to confess that they read this great book at all, as if it were an indication of weakness of mind. They are not ashamed to be caught reading Shakespeare, or Tennyson, or Bacon, or even an off-color novel. But they do not like any one to see them with a Bible in their hands. They want to be considered wise in science, along intellectual lines, in literature, in the wisdom of this world. It never occurs to them that the Bible is able to make them wise as no other book or books ever written can do. There really is no other book in the world that contains so much profound wisdom. It tells us about God. It pictures the whole



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truth about men. It holds for us the key to all mystery. It tells us how to live and how to die.

The words of life rejoice the heart. There is a legend of the discovery of a strange harp amid some Egyptian ruins. It was ancient and remarkable, but there was no music in it. As we study the Bible we have in our hands a harp which at once begins to give out the sweetest songs. This is a sad world. It has many sorrows. Life is full of mysteries and perplexities. Science, philosophy, poetry, art, have no secret of joy for us, can tell us of no way to be glad and happy. But the words of the Lord rejoice the heart. There is no grief for which the Bible does not have a comfort. There is no sorrow which it cannot turn into joy.

The words of life give comfort. A book with no comfort for those in trouble would not meet the needs of the great mass of men and women. You may not need consolation just to-day, and you may almost grow impatient when in reading the Bible you come upon



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word after word meant to give cheer and uplifting. "This means nothing to me," you say. "I have no need of comfort." But perhaps the heart of the person next to you is crying out for some consoling word and would be bitterly disappointed if the holy book had only ethical precepts, lessons of duty, and urgent exhortations, with no words of tenderness, nothing to soothe grief. If the Bible were not a book of comfort it would not be loved as it is. A noted preacher, in reviewing his long pastorate, said that if he were beginning again his pastoral work, there were several things he would do which he had not done. One of these was that he would preach more comfortingly. A great many preachers, when they look back from the end of their ministry, seeing all things then in the light of eternity, will regret that they did not preach more comfortingly.

One of the most pathetic things one sees in going about among sorrowing ones is, how many people shut their eyes to the light and joy which the Bible offers to them, and their



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ears to the glorious and blessed consolations which are spoken to them. One writes:

*"That little sunbeam, which so softly came*
*And crept in through the shutters of your room,*
*To-day, in letters beautiful, these words*
*With golden pencil traced upon the gloom:*

*"'You think me beautiful, and fondly love*
*My little light. Why, then, throw open wide*
*Those gloomy shutters, for a great bright*
*World of sunshine lingers just outside.'*

*"That little joy that stole unconsciously*
*Into your weary soul and thrilled anew*
*Your flagging energies one transient moment,*
*Said, 'There is a whole long life like this for you.'"*

There is a great skyful of light that waits to flood our hearts, and we shut it all out but a few half-dimmed rays that steal in through a broken pane. There is an infinitude of comfort that longs to come to us to fill our life, and we receive only a word or two of it, keep-



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ing our great world of sorrow unconsoled. Why should we so rob ourselves when God longs to give us such measurelessness of comfort? He does not want us to go grieving through this world when there is such boundless consolation waiting at our doors.

The words of life build up character. The great business of life is to grow into the beauty of Christ and to learn to do the will of God. In this, nothing but the divine words will avail. St. Paul exhorts us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. We are to *let* it dwell—so then we can hinder it from abiding with us, we can shut it out from our lives, if we will. We can shut it out; we must open the doors willingly, if it is to be admitted. Then it is to dwell in us. To dwell is to stay. It is not enough to let it come into our hearts for a moment, and then go out, like a bird that flees in at your window, sings a snatch of song and then flies away again. The divine word must make its home with us, in us.

All the Bible is valuable, has its place in fashioning our character and making our



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life. St. Paul says that every Scripture inspired of God is profitable. God never inspired a word that will not be profitable in its place and at its time. Every inspired Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in right living. Some people think there are certain portions of the Scriptures which cannot be of any profit. Of course there are degrees of value in different portions. We would not say that a chapter of hard names in Chronicles is as spiritually profitable as a chapter in one of the Gospels. Yet a good old woman used to stumble over the hard genealogical lists she came upon, trying to pronounce them and then to remember them. She said she would be dreadfully ashamed to meet these people in heaven and not know their names.

Some one gives this incident. In a Christian home, not long since, the mother asked her son, a young man, a church member, where his Bible was. He replied, with some confusion: "I don't know, mother. I guess it is



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in my trunk up in the store-room." Turning to her daughter the mother asked: "Where is your Bible, Mary?" The girl replied: "I am not sure, mother. I think it is upstairs in one of my bureau drawers." Of what use were these Bibles in the lives of those who possessed them? Does any one live better because he has a Bible in the store-room, or upstairs in the bureau drawer?

The old Testament tells a story of a lost Bible. It had been lost for a good while—lost, too, in the temple. Things were going sadly wrong in those days, and the book got lost. They were repairing the temple, however, and one day somebody came upon the lost book. The king and the priests began to read it, and, strange to say, began to weep. They found that they had been sinning greatly because they had not been reading the book to learn what God's will for them was. So they repented and began again to read the holy words and to do the things they were commanded to do, and there was a revival. Would it not be a blessed thing



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if we would all search our store-rooms, trunks, book-cases, and bureau drawers and find every lost Bible and begin to read what God says to his children?

The words of Christ living in us will start songs. Those who have the gift of song are wondrously dowered. Not all of us, however, can sing to the pleasure and edification of others. But we may all make our lives songs. St. Paul dwells much on joy as an invariable quality of the Christian life. The word of Christ living in a man puts psalms and hymns into his lips and life. The life of Christ was the ideal life. He never failed in any way. He never got discouraged. He was never impatient. He never complained or murmured. He never fretted or worried. He never was disagreeable, however much people annoyed him. He never showed hurt feeling. He was never afraid, never yielded to temptation.



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# Presenting Men Perfect



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*"Let me to-day do something that shall take*
*A little sadness from the world's vast store,*
*And may I be so favored as to make*
*Of joy's too scanty sum a little more.*

*"Let me not hurt, by any selfish deed*
*Or thoughtless word, the heart of foe or friend,*
*Nor would I pass, unseeing, worthy need,*
*Or sin by silence where I should defend.*

*"However meagre is my worldly wealth,*
*Let me give something that shall aid my kind,*
*A word of courage or a thought of health,*
*Dropped as I pass for troubled hearts to find."*



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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# Presenting Men Perfect

E are each others' keeper in a more serious sense than we think. When a new friend is given to us we come under very sacred obligation to do him good, not evil, to guard his interests, to seek to be a blessing to him in every way. St. Paul said his aim was to present every man perfect in Christ. He was looking on to the end of his ministry. He saw in every person he met or knew one for whom he must give account, whom he must bring to Christ at last in spotless beauty. Every Christian must likewise present spotless and perfect before Christ those who are committed to his keeping.

We are responsible for our failures in duty to each other. A man rushed into his pastor's study one morning, in great distress, and



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said, "Oh, sir, my daughter is dead, and she must tell God that she never heard a prayer in her father's house." He was startled to remember that he had done nothing to prepare his own child for appearing before God. Are there not many persons who fail in this duty? The same responsibility rests on each one of us in his own measure regarding every life that comes within our reach or influence, in his own home and without.

St. Paul wished to see certain persons in Rome, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift. He also exhorts us to speak to others in our conversation only words that will minister grace to them, start in their minds and hearts thoughts of good, of purity, of love, inspiring them to better things. Even amid the idle, playful talk of our lighter conversation, we should say some earnest word that may be remembered, and that may do good. All our influence upon others, upon every other person whom our life touches, should be such as will put upon them touches of beauty and help in some way



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to fit them for coming at last perfect into God's presence.

Perfection must be thought of in two phases —negative and positive. It should be unspotted, without blemish, but it must also fill up the measure of its capacity. We are not to be unkind, but we are also to be kind. It is not enough to wash a bulb and to make it clean; the bulb must also be developed, until its hidden beauty is brought out. Perfection is not merely making a life white; it means also the bringing out of all the life's powers and capacities until they reach their best. The one-talented man in the parable brought back his talent perfect — unwasted, full-weight, bright and shining, but he was condemned as wicked and slothful, because he had kept it hidden and had not used it. The capacity was not squandered, not a particle of it, but it had gained nothing. The men who were commended that day were those who had traded with their talents, making the two become four, and the five multiply to ten.



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We do not know how many strings there are in our harp that have never yet given out a musical note or a bar of song, which might be made to give forth most sweet and inspiring melody. There is a story of Ole Bull, the great violinist, and John Ericsson, the inventor. They were old friends, but the musician could not get the inventor to listen to his violin. All he thought about was machines. He had no time for music. He did not know there was any music in his soul. Ole Bull then prepared a little ruse, and one day took his violin to Ericsson, asking him to mend it —something had gone wrong with it, he said. Then, to test it, after the mending, Ole Bull drew the bow lightly over the strings, and soon the most marvellous notes filled the office. Ericsson sat amazed, entranced, and begged the musician to play on. "I never knew before that I cared for music," he said. It was the discovery of a power and faculty in his soul which, until now, had been sleeping.

We do not dream what capacities of ours are



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lying undeveloped, useless, unawaked, like music in a sleeping harp. It is said that there are millions of dollars in this country hoarded up, hidden in chinks of walls, wrapped in bags, secreted in cellars, or buried in old kettles, not doing any good, not increasing by being traded with. Think, too, of the gifts, talents, and powers of life, lying hidden in people's brains, hands, tongues, and hearts, not being used in any way to enrich the world, to add to its beauty, to give joy and comfort. Think of yourself, of the splendid capacities in you, which are not being developed. You are responsible not merely for being a respectable sort of person; you are called and required to be perfect, to have all your gifts and capacities developed to their best and highest degree.

St. Paul thought much of this matter of responsibility for others. When we begin to understand what life means, we see that we have a responsibility for helping to make every one perfect in Christ. That is the central meaning of the lesson of missions. Jesus,



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before he went away, bade his followers to go and make disciples of all the nations. We have a duty to every human being under heaven. We are to love him and do everything we can to bring him to Christ. If we find our neighbor fallen by the wayside, hurt, we are to stop, no matter how busy we are, how hurried, nor how many other duties we have in hand, and relieve him. If he is hungry, we are to feed him. If he is thirsty, we are to give him drink. If we come upon him sick and do not minister unto him, if he comes to our door as a stranger, and we turn him away, we have failed in our duty of love to him.

But our responsibility does not end with our ministries to men's physical needs. We are our brother's keeper in every sense. We are to seek to make every man perfect in his life and character. We are never to do anything to hurt another, taking this also in its broadest sense, referring to bodily injury, to the marring of the mind, or to spiritual harm. A careless nurse seventy years ago let the



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baby fall, and for all the years since a man with a crippled body has been going about the streets, a mere wreck of what he might have been. From an incompetent and inexperienced teacher a number of years since a boy received defective and false teaching, and his career has been spoiled, his usefulness diminished, his standing among his fellows hurt. Those who know him best say that the warping and hurting of his life by his teacher are responsible in a large measure for his failure.

Some fifteen or twenty years since a beautiful girl, who had been brought up in a Christian home, had given herself to Christ and was beginning a consecrated Christian life, fell under the influence, for a single summer, of a relative who called himself an agnostic. She was in this man's home and listened to his insinuating words. He laughed at her mother's teachings about God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and prayer. He professed to pity the girl's delusions, and spoke to her in a sceptical way until her mind became filled with



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that is not miraculous. Everybody casts a shadow. Every one of us exerts some kind of unconscious influence over others. It may not always be a healing shadow, but it always makes an impression. Our influence is that which we unconsciously breathe out wherever we go. Whatever we do is made more important, or less, by our personality.

The shadow of Peter healed the sick on whom it fell. Every one of us has some influence. Either we will make those we touch better, nobler, truer, or we will leave them not so good. There is something almost startling in the thought that in every word we speak, in every deed we do, in every impression we leave, we are setting in motion an influence which shall go on forever.

We should make sure that the impression we make in the world shall always be good. We are meeting people all the while. Every touch we put upon their lives is for eternity. Will it be for beauty or for marring? George Macdonald tells of a boy looking intently, late one afternoon, toward the heavens. His



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mother asked him what he was thinking of so seriously, and he said, "I was wishing that I were a painter, that I might help God paint his clouds and sunsets." It was a beautiful wish. But God does not need us to help him paint his clouds. Instead, however, he has higher and nobler work for us to do. George Macdonald says again, "If I can put one touch of rosy sunset into the life of any man or woman, I shall feel that I have worked with God." Putting a touch of beauty on a soul is immortal work. Clouds vanish, but the impression put upon a life is forever.

Recently the papers told us that a distinguished artist in Paris had destroyed pictures of his own, worth a hundred thousand dollars, representing three years of labor, because he had come to believe that they were not worthy art. While preparing them for public exhibition he became discouraged with them. He said they were not fit to be passed on to posterity. So with a knife and a paint brush he destroyed them all. But we cannot do this with the pictures we paint on the



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canvas of people's lives. Think of a man of sixty-eight, looking back over his life, considering what he has done, noting carefully the impressions he has made on other lives, and finding that he has been doing harm, not good, all these years, that he has been leaving blots and stains on characters instead of marks of beauty, that he has been influencing others to choose the wrong instead of the right. Can he in his penitence and despair undo all this evil, or any of it? Can he cut these unworthy pictures from their frames, or dash and blot them with his brush? No; what he has done must stand—not a line can be changed. Think of the irretrievableness of the hurt you did yesterday to another, or the temptation coming through you which caused another to commit a sin. One told of a letter he had written which he would have given his right hand to get back, but he could not recall it. We should never forget that if our influence is evil, we never can undo it. If we say a false word about another, defaming him, we may put upon his name a stain which



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all the water of the ocean cannot wash off. One who by his example leads a young man to take his first drink, so that he becomes a drunkard, never can undo the evil. Pilate spoke more truly than he knew when he said, "What I have written I have written."

No one liveth unto himself. You cannot get away from your entanglements with people. You cannot live and not influence others. If you were on Selkirk's Island and were the only human being there, you might say you have no influence, that it is no matter what you do, how you live—no matter to anybody but yourself. But you are not thus living by yourself. People throng all about you. You are always touching other lives, either helpfully or hurtfully. Be sure you never give forth any influence that will harm any other, or start the least trace of evil in the world. A great author said, at the close of his life, that so far as he knew, he had never written in any of his books one sentence that he would wish to recall. That was a fine test of a life. There can be no higher ideal in living than



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that we may never do anything which, when we come to the end, we shall wish we had not done.

Have you ever thought how many of every day's acts are induced by other acts? One person does a kindness to some one in trouble, and another, two others, twenty others, are influenced by it to do similar kindnesses. A poor boy was drawing home one day a little wagon filled with pieces of broken boards which he had gathered about some building operation. He was tired, his feet were bare, his clothing was ragged, his face was pinched and pale, telling of poverty and hunger. The boy had stopped to rest and had gone asleep. His cap had fallen from his head and his face was exposed to the sun. Then an old man, carrying a wood saw, passing along, saw the boy, and a look of pity came into his face. Taking from his pail his own scanty dinner, he laid it down beside the lad and hurried away. Others saw the act. A man walked down from his house near by and laid a silver half dollar beside the workman's dinner. A



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woman, living across the street, brought a good cap. A child came running with a pair of shoes and another with a coat. Other persons stopped, whispered, dropped silver. So, from the old wood sawyer's one kindly act, there had gone out this wave of influence, leading a score or more of people to do likewise.

We never know what may be the effect of our simplest doing of our duty. One day Jesus had been praying apart. His disciples saw him and stood still in reverence. Something in his manner made them quiet and thoughtful. When he rose from his knees, they asked him to teach them to pray. It was the unconscious influence of his simple act that impressed them. One of Horace Bushnell's great sermons is on "Unconscious Influence." It is based on the incident of the resurrection morning, when Peter and John ran to the empty grave. John was younger than Peter, and fleeter of foot, and he outran the older man, but he stood there, awed and hesitating, not going into the tomb. Then Peter came



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up and at once went in. Dr. Bushnell's text is, "Then entered therefore the other disciple also." Peter is unconscious, as he comes up and goes straight in, that he is drawing in his brother apostle also. So is it continually in life. The bold unconsciously make the timid brave. One nervous, restless person in a home makes all the household nervous and restless. One quiet, restful person makes it easier for all the family to be at peace. One Christian who is never troubled diffuses confidence among all the company.

One night many years ago two young men were put into the same room in an English country inn. One of them was a heedless, thoughtless youth. The other, when the time for retiring came, quietly knelt down beside the bed and prayed in silence. His companion was strangely impressed. Fifty years afterward he wrote, "That scene, so unostentatious and so unconcealed, aroused my slumbering conscience, and sent an arrow into my heart." The result was the young man's conversion to God, followed by long years of



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service as a Christian minister and as a writer of books which have greatly blessed the world. "Nearly half a century has rolled away," he wrote again, "with its multitudinous events, but that old chamber, that humble couch, that silently praying youth, are still present to my imagination and will never be forgotten, even amid the splendors of heaven and through the ages of eternity."

It was but a lowly, simple act of common faithfulness, modest, with no desire to be seen, without thought of influence save as the prayer would bring down blessing upon his own soul; yet there went out from it a power which gave a noble Christian life to the world, and a long ministry of usefulness. Suppose that every young Christian shall be quietly and bravely faithful in every duty, in every place, this year, next year, all the years; think of the tremendous influence that such faithfulness will exert everywhere. It is not easy always. It is easy to stand up with a great company, touching arms and shoulders, and say, "I will never fail my Master in



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any place." When all are together, each makes the other strong. But to-morrow you may have to stand alone. Then it will not be easy. Yet it will be just as essential that you own Christ there. You will then be the only one he will have to stand for him and if you fail him, his cause will fail at that point.

It may be in the office, in the store, in the shop, in the school, on the playground. It may be in the way you endure a sneer, the way you do a simple task, the way you meet an opportunity to be dishonest, the way you meet a request to do some one a wrong act, the way you answer a slight. Once in Wellesley College a student was complaining bitterly to the president of a certain rudeness that had been shown to her. The president said, "Why not be superior to these things and let them go unregarded?" "Miss Freeman," retorted the student, "I wonder how you would like to be insulted." Miss Freeman drew herself up with fine dignity and said, "Miss S., there is no one living who could insult me." This was true. If any one had



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attempted to insult her, he would have found her altogether beyond his reach. No one ever could insult Jesus. Men might spit in his face, they might pluck out his beard, they might mock him, but they could not insult him. You cannot insult the stars by flinging mud at them. Our lives should be so independent of earthly conditions that no insult ever can reach us, hid as we are with Christ in God. So it may be in bearing scoffs, mockings, insults, that we will be called to be faithful. In whatever form the testing comes, be true, and fail not your Master.

Our influence is involuntary. We cannot make it what we want it to be by any planning or posing. It distils from our life as it is. It is our life that we need to watch, for our influence will always be a true and exact diffusion of the essential things in us. If we would have our influence fragrant and sweet, we need only to do always the things that please Christ.

Dr. W. L. Watkinson says: "Example that has no voice, the commonplace deed that



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secures no chronicle, the personal magnetism that defies analysis—these are the precious, silent forces making for righteousness. No philosophy can explain the mysterious elements of Christian influence; but such influence is the supreme force working in society for its purification and uplifting. Let us aim at the sincerest, deepest, purest personal life, and we shall bless the world more than we think; we shall, unperceived by ourselves, be enriching it all day long with the ethers of heaven."



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# Is God Always Kind?



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*"O pilgrim, as you journey, do you ever gladly say,*
*In spite of heavy burdens and the roughness of the way,*
*That it does not surely matter—all the strange and bitter stress;*
*Heat and cold, and toil and sorrow—'twill be healed with blessedness,*
*For the road leads home?"*

*"Is it raining, little flower?*
*Be glad of rain.*
*Too much sun would wither thee;*
*'Twill shine again.*
*The sky is very black, 'tis true;*
*But just behind it shines the blue.*

*"Art thou weary, tender heart?*
*Be glad of pain!*
*In sorrow sweetest things will grow,*
*As flowers in rain.*
*God watches; and thou wilt have the sun,*
*When clouds their perfect work have done."*

—Mary F. Butts.



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## CHAPTER NINE

# Is God Always Kind?

HE Bible takes especial pains to assure us of the everlastingness of God's love. In one passage, for example, it is declared that while even the mountains shall depart, God's loving-kindness shall never depart from his people. The word loving-kindness suggests all that is sweet, tender, and comforting in love. There are men who love and are not kind. They would give all they have to help a friend, and yet they lack gentleness. They are stern, severe, brusque. They have not a gracious manner. They are not kind. Kindness is love's best. It not only gives, but gives in a way that adds a hundredfold to the value of the gift.

Kindness in this passage is made still tenderer by the qualifying word loving—loving-kind-



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ness. There may be kindness that is not loving. It is a great comfort to know that God's power shall not depart, is eternal. Nothing ever can sweep away our refuge in the almighty strength of God.

*"God is our refuge and strength,*
*A very present help in trouble.*
*Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change,*
*And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas."*

But power is cold—it lacks heart. The word loving-kindness means far more. It suggests affection, tenderness, all that is warmest, tenderest, and most comforting.

The assurance is that the loving-kindness of God shall not fail. There never will be a day or an hour when he will not be kind. Can he be a father and not be kind to his children? The Bible is full of the most exquisite revealings of God's kindness. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him." "As one whom his mother



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comforteth, so will I comfort thee." "The mountains may depart—but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee." It is also in the Old Testament that we find another exquisite picture of the divine loving-kindness. In his farewell address Moses said to his people, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." There is comfort in the embrace of a father's or a mother's arms. But we are not sure that we shall have these arms very long; no human arms are everlasting. The arms of God, however, will never unclasp their hold. Then they are ever underneath. We cannot fall out of their clasp. However low we may sink in weakness or in pain, these arms will always be underneath us.

Indeed it is only when the mountains do depart that we can know the best of the kindness of God. It is when father and mother are gone that the Lord takes us up into the closest, tenderest love. We need his love most then and the need enables us to find the blessing. In the days of earthly prosperity and gladness, when human love is about us with



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all its sweetness, tenderness, and satisfyingness, we do not find, do not realize, the best of God's loving-kindness. It is concealed in the fulness of human love and earthly blessing which we enjoy. It is only need that finds and reveals the best things. But when trouble comes and the earthly good things that have meant most to us are stripped off, then we find the infinite blessings of the divine kindness. We should never see the stars if the sun did not go down. We should never discover the grace and loving-kindness of God if there were never a break in our earthly joy. We should never know the wonder of God's comfort if we had no sorrow. It is when the visible mountains depart, and we have them no longer to hide in, that our hearts find the mountains of God, with their eternal refuges.

But does God's kindness never depart from us? Are there no days when he really is not kind to us? Are there no experiences in our lives when we can say, "God is not kind to me any more?" Such questions as these are



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continually asked by those who are in trouble or sorrow, those who have had great losses or bitter disappointments. "Where can you find the loving-kindness of God in my experiences of the past months?" one asks. We may not be able to interpret the meaning of these strange providences, which so often stagger the faith of earnest souls. We do know, however, that there never is a break in the divine loving even when our eyes can see no love.

We are sure, for example, that God knows all the things that try us. The prophet taunted the worshippers of Baal when, after calling upon their god all day, they got no answer, and said: "Cry aloud. Either he is musing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened." But there can be no such taunts concerning our God, for he is never absent when we call, nor asleep, needing to be awakened, nor ignorant of our condition, needing to be informed.

"*He knows the bitter, weary way:*
*He knows the endless striving, day by day,*
*The souls that weep, the souls that pray.*



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*"He knows how hard the fight hath been,*
*The clouds that come our lives between,*
*The wounds the world hath never seen.*

*"He knows when faint and worn we sink,*
*How deep the pain, how near the brink*
*Of dark despair we pause and shrink.*

*"He knows! Oh, thought so full of bliss,*
*For though our joy on earth we miss,*
*We still can bear it, feeling this—*
*He knows."*

Does he know all that we suffer, and yet send no relief? Does he know the wrongs his child is enduring and not interfere to check their continuance? Does he know the pain your friend is experiencing, hear the prayers that are made so agonizingly, and yet bring no help? Yes, he knows. The crippled girl in Ralph Connor's story could not understand how God could be good and let her suffer so. Her friend asked her about the plaster jacket the doctors had put on her.

"Did it hurt you when they put it on?"



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"It was awful," she replied, shuddering as she thought of it.

"What a pity your father wasn't there!" said her friend.

"Why, he was there."

"Your father there, and did not stop the doctors' hurting you so cruelly?"

"Why, he let them hurt me. It's going to help me, perhaps make me able to walk about some day."

"Oh, then they did not hurt you in cruelty, just because they wanted to? I mean that your father loves you, though he let you be hurt; or, rather, he let the doctors hurt you just because he loves you, and wants to make you well."

The girl became very thoughtful. Presently the light began to shine in her face. Then she asked, as the mystery of it all began to become clear to her, "Do you mean that though God let me fall and suffer so, he loves me?"

"Her friend nodded. Presently she said, as if to herself, "I wonder if that can be true."



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We are sure also that God could relieve us of the things that are so hard for us to bear —could, if he would. There is nothing that God could not do. Pilate boasted to Jesus that he had power to crucify him, or to release him, as he chose. "No," said Jesus; "thou canst have power over me only as it is given thee from above." This is God's world, and nothing can get out of God's hands. "My loving-kindness shall not depart from thee."

What, really, is God's loving-kindness? At first we may think it is only tenderness, that it is always pitiful and compassionate, that it cannot permit pain or suffering. But is that God's kindness? There are two ways of showing kindness. One is by being always tender and keeping our loved one from every roughness, every self-denial, by letting him always have his own way—that is what some people mean by kindness. Some parents show this sort of kindness to their children, denying them nothing, never restraining them, never permitting them to suffer anything that



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would give pain. The other sort of kindness thinks of the best things and seeks the good of the child, not merely his ease or pleasure.

Sometimes God lets us suffer, causes us to suffer. Is he then unkind? Does a loving parent never willingly let his child suffer? Your child is hurt, has a foot crushed under a carwheel on the street. The surgeons consider what should be done and decide that there must be an amputation, or the child's life cannot be saved. As the little one is carried to the operating room, would you begin to cry out that the doctors are unkind, cruel? Oh, no; it does not seem kindness to use the knife, but you know it would be most cruel unkindness not to do it in the circumstances.

When God says to you in the morning, "My loving-kindness shall not depart from you," he does not mean that you will have no suffering, no self-denial, no pain, no hardship; he means that the whole course of his treatment of you that day will be toward the fashion-



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ing of your life into Christlikeness, the training of your powers for usefulness. Sometimes he will let you suffer, perhaps torturingly, seeming to disregard your happiness. But it is just because he loves you that he does this. If he saved you from all suffering and pain, he would really be unkind. Some day you will understand that the truest kindness is always that which makes your life better, richer, nobler, and a greater blessing to the world.



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# Peril in Life's Changes



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*"There's a Something that maketh a palace*
*Out of four little walls and a prayer;*
*A Something that seeth a garden*
*In one little flower that is fair;*
*That tuneth two hearts to one purpose*
*And maketh one heart of two;*
*That smiles when the sky is a gray one*
*And smiles when the sky is blue.*

*"Without it no garden hath fragrance,*
*Tho' it holdeth the wide world's blooms;*
*Without it a palace a prison*
*With cells for banqueting rooms;*
*This Something that halloweth sorrow*
*And stealeth the sting from care;*
*This Something that maketh a palace*
*Out of four little walls and a prayer."*



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## CHAPTER TEN

# Peril in Life's Changes

HERE is always peril in change. The more suddenly the change comes, and the greater it is, the more is the danger that hurt will result. There is danger in the ordinary changes of life, from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood and womanhood. Many do not make the transition safely. There always are certain things that must be left behind as each period is abandoned for the one that succeeds it. The mother does not like to see her boy lose his curls and his boyish looks and ways. She wishes she could keep her baby always. But it would be a sad thing if he kept his childish manners, his immature development, his baby face and looks. This would be abnormal, an arrested growth, becoming a lasting grief. The transi-



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tion must be made, and there is not meant to be any loss in it, but rather a gain. As the blossom fades and falls off, but leaves its secret of life behind for the beginning of the fruit, so the change from boyhood is not intended to be the losing of anything, but an unfolding, a development. The true avails of childish sweetness and beauty stay in the heart and life of youth, and become its strength. The change is safely passed when the new emerges from the old in healthful grace and vigor.

But there is always danger in the transition, and not always is it safely passed. There is need of great wisdom in those who care for the child, for its education, for its health, for the directing of the influences which affect its growth. Many careers are wrecked in the early formative periods. It is the mission of the ideal home to be in every way a wholesome place for children to grow up in, a place of love, of joy and of cheer, not of over-kindness or over-indulgence, not of forcing processes or excessive stimulation, not of



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dulness, dreariness, or lack of vitalizing and energizing influences. The true education in this educational period is that which insures wholesome outcome, developing into richer, stronger, more beautiful life.

There is peril also in the changes that come through life's experiences. The impression prevails that pain and sorrow, for example, are always beneficent. It is admitted that there is danger in unbroken prosperity, in a life without cross or trial, but somehow it is widely felt or believed that trouble always brings blessing, that at least it is a safe condition, tending toward good. Yet there is peril also in suffering. It does not always make people better, sweeter in spirit, more patient, more heavenly minded. It is its mission to produce such results. There is a Beatitude for those that mourn. Tribulation is the way to the kingdom. The hard things of life are meant to be disciplinary. Earthly loss should bring us heavenly gain. Pain should sweeten our spirits. Disappointments should teach us to accept God's



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appointments. We should always be better for affliction.

But not always are we thus helped and made better by trial. Sickness sometimes makes people unhappy, discontented, impatient, exacting, selfish. Pain sometimes brings out not the best but the worst in one's nature. Some men and women are sorely hurt in their disposition by it. Loss sometimes proves loss indeed, leaving nothing in its place to supply the lack of that which is taken away. Grief makes some people hard and bitter. They refuse to submit to God when the cross is heavy and grow rebellious.

Thus the experience of trouble always has its perils. The deep waters of sorrow have their hidden rocks and there is no chart which marks them; those who pass over them need a wise and skilful Pilot. At no time do we need the divine guidance more than when we are passing through sore trials. The only safe way is to commit ourselves to the will of God and the heavenly guardianship. Then no trouble can harm us. The fiercest storms



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cannot injure us when we are beneath God's sheltering care.

"*God plants us where we grow.*
*It is not that because a bud is born*
*At a wild brier's end full in the wild beast's way,*
*We ought to pluck and put it out of reach on the oak tree-top.*"

An experience of change which has its peculiar perils is when one suddenly passes out of prosperous circumstances into poverty. Only the other day a little family entered an experience of this kind. They had been enjoying all the comforts of a beautiful home. Money was abundant. No want was ungratified. The father was in a successful business. The mother was carefully sheltered and free from care. The only daughter was at school in another city. The father, not content with a good, regular business, tried speculation—a temptation to whose fascination many men yield. For a time he was successful and his success lured him on. Failing in some ven-



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tures, he invested more, hoping to win back what he had lost, and lost more, until all was gone. The beautiful home had to be given up, pictures and furniture were sold, the daughter was recalled from school and began seeking a position in which she could become a bread-winner. The little family is living in a boarding-house, in pinching and uncongenial circumstances.

All this is pathetic enough, but this is not the worst of it. Many people are always poor, with experiences of want, self-denial and hardship all their days, and yet live sweetly, beautifully and nobly through it all. They have never known any other condition. The best things in their lives are the fruits of their privation, their toil, and their pressing need. But all is different with this family. In the past, until now, they had never had a wish denied them. They had always been used to luxury, never finding it necessary to go without anything they wanted, and this made it very hard for them to accept the bareness of their new condition. They had been accus-



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tomed to a good social position, and that is now gone—they have left their old neighborhood among well-to-do neighbors, and are staying on a very plain quiet street. People probably just as good as they are live all about them and are really quite happy, because they have always been familiar with poverty's cot and poverty's fare. There is no dishonor in living in such circumstances. God loves the poor, and it may be seen at the last that poverty has done more for the kingdom of Christ, for human happiness, and for the enriching of the world, than wealth has done.

*"Poverty bought our little lot,*
*Flooded with daisy blooms;*
*Poverty built our little cot,*
*And furnished all its rooms.*

*"Yet Peace leans over Labor's chair,*
*Joys at the fireside throng,*
*While up and down on Poverty's stair*
*Love sings the whole day long."*

But with this little family all is different—they have not been used to poverty—and the



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danger is that they will be hurt in the new experience. Their family life appears to be suffering. They are all discouraged and seem to be less joyous and less affectionate. The mother gives way to her feeling of discontent and she has not her old cheerfulness, courage and kindliness. The father has not proved himself brave and strong, but seems to have succumbed to defeat and goes about like a broken man. The daughter, unused to care, to responsibility, untrained for work and for endurance, finds it hard to face life as a working girl. She is willing enough, even eager to take up her burden, but she is unprepared for it, and it is not going to be easy for her to get the preparation, since she must begin at once to provide for herself and also do her share in providing for her family.

It is evident that there are dangers in this experience for this young girl as well as for the others of the family. It will not be easy for her to pass through it without losing something of the beauty, the gentleness, the



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simplicity, the charm of her life. The burden is too heavy for her young shoulders. The roughness of the world may hurt the bloom of her life and rob her of somewhat of the brightness of girlhood. It is a serious loss to her to have to give up her school life to become a bread-winner. It seems to be too great a sacrifice for her to be required to make. There is danger that she may lose heart, that her spirit may be broken and her life irreparably hurt.

The problem of passing through a change like this is a very serious one. There is great danger that harm shall result. It is possible, however, to meet the experience successfully. Burdens, if accepted cheerfully and borne heroically, become a help, not a hindrance. The trials of life all have in them their opportunity for learning new lessons, gaining new strength, reaching new heights. The effects upon us of the changes through which we pass depend upon ourselves. All life is meant to be disciplinary—it is God's intention that each event and experience shall



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make us better, more beautiful in character, fitter for the work of life. We are always at school. It is not the divine will that anything that comes into our life shall do us harm, shall spoil our life or prove a hindrance to our real progress. Flowers grow under the snow in the late winter, unhurt by the cold and the ice. The beautiful things of love should be kept gentle and lovely under the shelter of divine love, through even the hardest experiences. If only we meet the experiences of life as we may, however severe they may be in their natural consequences, they may be made into blessing and good. We need only to keep ourselves in the love of God and then no harm of any kind can come to us. "The highest joy is an *edelweiss*; it grows only bosomed in the snow and nursed by tempests. There is no joy like the divinely joyful sorrow, as there is no strength like the divinely strengthened weakness.

Every day brings its changes, its sudden trials and troubles, its losses, its disappointments, ofttimes its tragedies. It is well that



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we train ourselves to calmness and peace of mind, to self-control, so that we may never be swept away by the surprises of life and led to do rash and foolish things. The other day a family was startled to hear without warning that a son who was only a boy was married a week before to a girl of his own age. The first effect on all the household was consternation, which quickly passed into anger. Bitter words were spoken and there was danger that deeds of violence would be done, things for which the family would have grieved afterward. Then was the time when the soft answer that turneth away wrath was spoken, and peaceable counsel prevailed. There was danger of the wrecking of the happiness of the two young lives and the rending of the cordial relations in two families, with the starting of feuds and strifes which would have gone on for years. Happily, however, these perils were avoided. It is said that when a twig or even the smallest branch of a tree is bruised, all the tree begins to send of its life to heal the wound. Thus it



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was in these two homes. The folly of a hasty marriage was condoned and all the influence of the two families brought to bear to make the best of it. The young people were given every opportunity not only to be happy, but also to hold their place of love in the hearts of their respective households. There may still be regret at the hastiness of the marriage, but forgiveness will be full and complete, and unless further mistakes are made, all will go on happily.

The real problem of life is not to avoid hard and unpleasant experiences, surprises of sorrow, trying things, vicissitudes in circumstances, but in whatever changes or trials that may come, to be divinely led, preserved from mistakes and follies, guarded from evil in every form and brought into better, more beautiful life. Thus the changes that come will prove to be part of God's plan for our lives. The incidents of the common days will become links in the chain of providence. When we put our perplexing circumstances, whatever they are, into the hands of God,



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to be untangled by him and then ordered and directed in his wise way of love, we have nothing to do in the matter but our simple duty. We must keep our own hands off the tangles, believing that in God's own good time and in his own way he will bring about blessing, beauty and good.

*"I am glad to think*
*I am not bound to make the world go right:*
*But only to discover and to do*
*With cheerful heart the work that God appoints.*

*"I will trust in him*
*That he can hold his own; and I will take*
*His will, above the work he sendeth me,*
*To be my chiefest good."*



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# Helping by Prayer



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*"Lord, when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come!'*
*Then fold our hands without a care*
*For souls whom Thou hast died to save,*
*We do but mock Thee with our prayer.*

*"Thou couldst have sent an angel band*
*To call Thine erring children home;*
*And thus through heavenly ministries*
*On earth Thy kingdom might have come.*

*"But since to human hands like ours*
*Thou hast committed work divine,*
*Shall not our eager hearts make haste*
*To join their feeble powers with Thine?"*



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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Helping by Prayer

E are taught to pray for others. This is one of life's highest and plainest duties. St. Paul exhorts that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men. St. James exhorts us to pray one for another, adding that "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working." Thus prayer is put down among the active, working forces of the world, one of the ways in which we can do good to others. It avails much in its working.

When we think of it carefully we shall find that there really is no way in which we can do so much for others as by praying for them. Prayer is not merely a heart sigh, an expression of well-wishing—it lays hold upon the hand of God and brings divine power to



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bear in helping and blessing those for whom we make intercession. There always are things which we can do for others with our own hands—we mock God when we try to put our duties off on him—but there are many things which we can do only by prayer.

Friendship is precious and sacred, but friendship that does not pray lacks a vital element. It leaves God out. A Christian young woman is loved by a man who laughs at prayer, and laughs at her because she believes in prayer. Is it any wonder that the young woman hesitates to intrust her life, with all the interests of her future, to one who, though she believes him to be true, honorable and worthy, yet cannot give her the help that can come only through a true friend's prayers? Earth's sweetest flowers need heaven's dew to make them perfect in beauty and fragrance. Earth's best things are incomplete without heaven's benedictions. Love needs divine strength and grace to make it complete. An old writer said, "Pray for whom thou lovest; thou wilt never have any comfort of his friendship for whom



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thou dost not pray." Then some one writes as a response to this counsel:

*"Yes, pray for whom thou lovest; if uncounted wealth were thine,*
*The treasures of the boundless deep, the riches of the mine,*
*Thou couldst not to thy cherished friends a gift so dear impart,*
*As the earnest benediction of a deeply prayerful heart."*

"Pray for whom thou lovest." Nothing else you may do for your friend can possibly mean so much. Our hands are awkward and unskilful. Ofttimes even in our best-meant efforts we only hurt the life we try to heal with our touch. At the best we are poor bunglers in helping others. We have no skill or wisdom to help in the deepest ways. We do the wrong thing. We lift away burdens it were better our friends should carry longer, for our burdens do not fall by accident upon our shoulders; they are God's gifts and bring blessings. We make the path easy when it were



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better it had been left rough. We hurry some providence to get the blessing to our friend sooner, and in doing this give him fruit yet unripe, which can only do him harm. It were better for him to wait longer and get the fruit mellow and ripe. How glad we should be that we can put our friends into God's hands when they have sorrows and need comforting, or are in difficulties, longing for deliverance, or have hard questions which they do not know how to answer.

It has been said that wrong advice has wrecked destinies. As experience increases and we learn more of the seriousness of living we shrink more and more, if we are wise, from giving advice. How do we know what our friends ought to do in this perplexity; which of two ways is the better way for them to take; how they can meet this emergency most wisely; whether they ought to accept or decline this friendship that is offered to them? We think of our friends in their troubles, sympathize with them and wish we could relieve them; but how do we know that relief



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from trouble would be best for them? We would not dare to take from them the cross they are bearing—how do we know that we would not be proving their worst enemy if we did? The cross is meant not to crush, but to lift. Almost the only safe thing our love can do is to ask God to do what he knows to be the best things for those he loves. Not to pray for them, but to try instead to do our own kindnesses for them, is to put our poor, ignorant, blundering help instead of God's wise and perfect help.

Failing to pray for our friends is therefore a sin against them. It is also a sin against God. The law of love requires us to think of others and to do as much for them as we would do for ourselves. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We understand this of deeds of kindness. But prayer is one of the duties of love, and we sin against our brother when we fail to pray for him. The mother who does for her child all that the tenderest human love can do and yet never prays for him, never seeks for him divine protection,



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guidance, blessing, is surely both wronging her child and sinning against God.

The duty of praying for others is clearly taught by Christ himself. It is woven into the whole of what is known as the Lord's Prayer. This prayer is addressed to "Our Father," not "My Father." It is not a prayer which we are to offer for ourselves alone. We may use it when we are alone, but we are not to think only of ourselves. We are to pray also for our Father's other children. "Give us this day our daily bread." We are not to think only of our own need—that would be most unchristian selfishness; we are to think of others as well. We are always in danger of narrowing our petitions to ourselves, and our own needs, while others' needs are crowded out. The last place in the world for selfishness is when we are bowing before God in prayer. Love should always then be at its best.

*"Bow thy head and pray*
*That while thy brother starves to-day*



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*Thou mayest not eat thy bread at ease;*
*Pray that no health or wealth or peace*
*May lull thy soul while the world lies*
*Suffering, and claims thy sacrifice."*

It is not enough to pray for our friends. Jesus teaches us that we are to love our enemies and be kind to those who are unkind to us. "For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same?" The same teaching applies to prayer. It is not enough to pray for those who are grateful and kind to us, who pray for us, who do things for us. We may pray also for those who treat us badly.

There is much ingratitude in the world. After the greatest kindness shown by us, running sometimes through years, those who have received help from us may forget everything we have done, and return only neglect and even wrong for all our love and service of



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past years. What is our Christian duty to those who may thus have requited our kindness with unkindness? Have we a right to resent the evil we have received? Does the injustice done to us free us from the duty of love to those who have done the injustice? May we cease to pray for them? When met by such an experience of ingratitude, Samuel said to the people of Israel that he would be sinning against God if he ceased to pray for them after they had been so ungrateful to him.

This question may become real and practical any day to any of us. We may be treated unjustly by one to whom we have been a faithful friend for years. Will that absolve us from being kind any longer to the ungrateful person? No; Christian love is not to be affected by any treatment it may receive from others. The true patriot is to be loyal to his country even though the country has been ungrateful to him. The Christian in his private relations is never to let his heart become embittered by any injustice done to him.



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Sometimes beside the brackish sea you will find a spring of water gushing up, as sweet as any that bursts from the hillside. When the tide is low you dip up its clear water and drink it and it refreshes you. A few hours later you come again and find the tide covering the place, its bitter waters rolling over the spring; but in a little while you pass again, and now the tide has rolled out to sea. You find the spring again and its clear streams are pouring up as sweet as before, without a trace of the brackishness of the sea in which the spring has been folded so long. So should it be with the love of the Christian heart. No wrong, no ingratitude, no cruelty, should ever embitter it. We should never cease to pray for others because they have been unkind to us.

We have a very definite word of our Master's on this matter. Jesus knew that our hearts are apt to grow bitter against those who do not love us, and to show resentment to those who do us harm, and so he gave this commandment: "I say unto you, Love your



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enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." He gave the reason, too—"that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." That is the way our Father loves—he loves his enemies, he blesses those that curse him, he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. Therefore if any one is harming us, that is the very person Christ especially commands us to pray for to-day.

When you kneel at the close of the day to pray and when you name in intercession those who have shown you kindness, number with them all who during the day may have been unkind, any who have injured you or who have spoken falsely or bitterly of you. "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you."



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# Being a Comfort to Others



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*"Afterwhile—and one intends*
*To be gentler to his friends—*
*To walk with them in the hush*
*Of still evenings, o'er the plush*
*Of home-leading fields, and stand*
*Long at parting, hand in hand:*
*One, in time, will joy to take*
*New resolves for some one's sake,*
*And wear them the look that lies*
*Clear and pure in other eyes—*
*He will soothe and reconcile*
*His own conscience—afterwhile."*

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.



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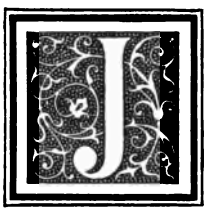
## CHAPTER TWELVE

# Being a Comfort to Others



UST after the death of Queen Victoria this beautiful story was told: She was visiting the wounded soldiers who had been brought back from South Africa. She was specially distressed by the suffering of one man who had been terribly hurt.

"Is there nothing that I can do for you?" asked the Queen.

The soldier replied, "Nothing, your Majesty, unless you would thank my nurse for her great kindness to me."

The Queen turned to the nurse, and said, with tears in her eyes, "I do thank you with all my heart for your kindness to this poor wounded son of mine."

There was something exquisitely beautiful in the soldier's unselfish thought of the nurse



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who had been such a comfort to him in his sufferings. His gratitude was so great that he sought even the Queen's honoring rather for her than for himself.

There is a beautiful charm in such self-forgetfulness as this, such entire elimination of one's self in thinking of others. There are those who reach this rare beauty of spirit. There are mothers who live for their children so utterly that they seek only their good, their happiness, never asking anything for themselves, never sparing themselves any cost or sacrifice to serve them. There is in many a home an unmarried sister who devotes herself to the comfort and good of the other members of her household with complete unselfishness, ministering to them in countless ways, with never a thought of rest, ease, or advantage for herself. Then, outside the circle of home, where we seem to have a right to expect service of love, there are those who live to do good, to give cheer, to be a comfort to others.

There really is no higher reach in life than



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that of being a blessing to others in one's own place. Every noble-spirited young person is ambitious to live well and helpfully, to do something worth while. But not all the really heroic things bring fame in this world. One may be a hero in God's sight and yet never hear a huzza from any human lips. When the country needed defenders, one boy entered the service, fought bravely, rose to honor, and returned, when the war was over, with high rank. He was greeted as a hero. His younger brother had stayed at home caring for his widowed mother and the little children—only a common farmer, without fame. But with God he was no less a hero than the other.

Then it is not only what we do, but even more what we are, that makes our lives count in their helpfulness and their capacity for giving pleasure to others. Some people are full of activity, even of eager helpfulness, and yet they are not always a comfort to their fellows. They have faults which mar the charm and the influence of their personality



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—dead flies which cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odor. They are not sweet, they lack humility, they are not really unselfish. People do not go to them with their perplexities and sorrows—there is in them something which hinders the outflow of confidence. One said, speaking of another, "He is one of the best men in the world, and is always offering his help, but somehow I could never go to him with my questions or with a sorrow." There is something in certain people's religion which mars its beauty. If we would be a comfort to others, our lives must be rich in lovingness. A mother said of her daughter, "She makes a beautiful climate for me." That is what we should make for the people who live near to us.

In one of his epistles St. Paul speaks of certain of his friends as "men that have been a comfort unto me." He was in prison, and in his loneliness these men had cheered and strengthened him. They had been kind to him, and their kindness had comforted him.



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He mentions by name three men who had specially helped him in this way. The first was Aristarchus, whom he calls "my fellow-prisoner." Perhaps he voluntarily stayed with the old minister in prison. No doubt he showed his love in many ways. Some one has defined a friend as "the person who comes in when all the world has gone out." That is what Aristarchus had been to Paul.

Another who had been a comfort to him was Mark. We are glad to have St. Paul write this, for many years before Mark had failed him, and the apostle would not trust him again. It is pleasant to know that Mark lived long enough and well enough to win again his old friend's confidence and affection.

There is another name in this list of honor—"Jesus that is called Justus." Not a hint is given of the way he had been a comfort to the apostle. Perhaps he had just been kind to him, doing nothing that could be written down, and yet no doubt his life was full of little gentle ministries that helped St. Paul



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more bravely and cheerfully to endure his chain. At least this man had been his friend, and just being a friend when one needs friends is something gloriously worth while. Some one has said, "The greatest thing that a man can do for his Heavenly Father is to be kind to some of the Father's other children."

The friends that St. Paul names were a comfort to him because they sympathized with him with a sympathy that was not obtrusive, not officious, not always reminding him of his chain and prison, but that manifested itself in quiet, unostentatious, inspiring ways. The word comfort is from a root which means to strengthen. It is like our noun cordial, in its old sense, something that invigorates, exhilarates; something that stimulates the circulation, making the pulses quicker, the life fuller. St. Paul's friends were a cordial to him, not lessening his sufferings nor lightening his burdens, but making him braver and stronger for endurance. They were a comfort to him.



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## Being a Comfort to Others

St. Paul himself was a wonderful example of a man who was a comfort to others. What his life, with its rich fulness and its genius for friendship, must have been to those who came into personal companionship with him! What a privilege it was to his fellow-craftsmen to have him working with them at their tent-making! His presence must have made the work seem lighter and the atmosphere of the shop brighter. We do not begin to realize what it means to us to live with certain people, to have them for friends, to drink from the fulness of their life. Harriet Prescott Spofford wrote of Phillips Brooks, after his death:

*"Perhaps we did not know how much of God*
*Was walking with us.*
*Surely not forlorn*
*Are men, when such great overflow of heaven*
*Brings down the light of the eternal morn*
*Into the earth's deep shadows, where they plod,*
*The slaves of sorrow."*

Men did not know how much of God was walking with them when they had St. Paul



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for companion, friend, teacher. The more closely we study his life and his words the more do we find in him and in his teachings of love, of the delicate refinements of love, of all gentleness and kindness. The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is matchless as a picture. It is like a dream in its beauty. But it was a dream which was realized in the writer's own life. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not—doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil." Some people praise this wonderful picture of love, but do not think of living it. What a comfort we would be to each other if we really lived in all our common days the teaching of this great chapter!

Some people have love in their hearts, while in disposition, in speech, in expression, they lack lovingness. St. Paul teaches us not only to have a kindly heart, but a gracious manner. In his epistles he exhorts to the rarest delicacy of courtesy. Perhaps we do not give sufficient emphasis to this phase of Christian



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culture. We condemn lying, as well we may, but we forget that rudeness is a sin, too, as are also thoughtlessness, discourtesy, censoriousness, sharpness in speech or tone. St. Paul names "whatsoever things are lovely" among the ideal qualities of Christian character. Our religion should be beautiful, winning. We are to please others for their good, to edification.

Those who live thus gently, thoughtfully, beautifully, will always be a comfort to others with whom they live. A pastor was commending religion to a boy, expressing the hope that he would give his heart to God in his youth. "Religion is a continual joy," he said. "Look at your sister, Sarah. How much that dear girl enjoys her religion!" "Yes," drawled the boy, with frank candor, "Sade may enjoy her religion, but nobody else in the house enjoys it." The boy's judgment may have been harsh and unjust, but there are professing Christians of whom it is true that their families do not enjoy their religion. It is not sweet. It is not a comfort to



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people. It is critical, rasping, censorious, exacting. It was a serious condemnation of this girl's religion that her family did not enjoy it.

A close observer has said that "Many a sister spoils her testimony in the church by her tongue in the kitchen." Another has said, "There are people who lead us heavenward, but stick pins in us all the way." In a conversation overheard on a railway train, one reports catching this fragment of talk: "Yes, I suppose she's good—I know she is. But she isn't pleasant to live with." A goodness that isn't pleasant to live with is not the kind that is most needed in this world. We may do all our duties faithfully, conscientiously, bearing our share of the burdens and cares, and yet if we are not pleasant to live with, we fail in the most essential quality of love. An unlovely spirit, frowns and chilling looks, sharp, impatient words, over-balance the eager, painstaking service that does so much to help in practical ways. What the person is mars the value of what he does.



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After all, being "pleasant to live with" is one of the final tests of Christlikeness in life. You are careful never to fail to do all the little things of duty. Your friends can never say that you are inattentive to them, that you leave undone the kindly deeds of neighborliness or even brotherliness. But if, meanwhile, you are not pleasant to live with, is there not something lacking? The ideal religious life is one that is a comfort to others as well as a help. It is gracious and winning in its spirit. It is a blessing to all it touches. It makes one a comfort not only in his own home, where even his dog has a better time because the master is a "Jesus Christian," but also in his church, among his neighbors, in the office or shop where he works. Then, withal, it makes him pleasant to live with.

This word of St. Paul's really tests the Christian life of every one of us. Are we a comfort to people? Are the boys and girls a comfort to their mothers and fathers? or do they vex them, fret them, keep them awake at night with anxiety? Are husbands and wives a real



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comfort to each other? Are we a comfort to our neighbors, kindly, thoughtful, obliging, ready always to be helpful and gracious? It has been named as the mark of a gentleman that he never gives pain to another. An English poet called Jesus "the first true gentleman who ever breathed." He never gave pain to any one. Love characterized him in all circumstances and experiences. Even when he was being betrayed, he was still the refined gentleman. When he was being nailed to the cross he prayed for his executioners. Love never failed in him. He was always a comfort to others.

We as Christ's followers should be so full of his spirit, have our lives so permeated with his grace, love, and meekness, that we shall be a comfort to all men, and, above all, shall be a comfort to God.



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# Nevertheless Afterward



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*"If we could see beyond to-day*
*As God can see;*
*If all the clouds should roll away,*
*The shadows flee—*
*O'er present griefs we would not fret,*
*Each sorrow we would soon forget,*
*For many joys are waiting yet*
*For you and me.*

*"If we could see, if we could know,*
*We often say!*
*But God in love a veil doth throw*
*Across our way;*
*We cannot see what lies before,*
*And so we cling to him the more.*
*He leads us till this life is o'er;*
*Trust and obey."*



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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# Nevertheless Afterward

HINGS are not finished as we see them to-day. To-morrow they will appear larger, greater. The bud you see one morning in the garden will be a full-blown rose in a little while. The brown seed you dropped in your window-box will be a beautiful plant by and by. Wherever there is life there is growth. Every act has its consequences. We cannot foretell what results shall follow from any choice we may make. We must always take account of the afterward, whatever it is we are doing, through whatever experiences we are passing.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has a suggestive passage about chastening. He quotes from the Book of Proverbs: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son,



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despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." People sometimes chafe when they have troubles. They fret and blame God. "What have I done," they ask, "that God is punishing me so?" But God may not be punishing them at all. Chastening is not punishing. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby." The present is hard and painful, but there will be an "afterward." Chastening now; afterward, peaceable fruit.

The figure of pruning is used by our Master. He tells us that every fruitful branch of the vine the wise husbandman prunes—the fruitful, not the unfruitful, branch. It is a wonderful comfort to suffering Christians to know that pruning is therefore really a mark of approval. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." There is a purpose also in the



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pruning. It is not any reckless trimming—the husbandman knows what he is doing. Pruning seems destructive. Sometimes it appears as if the whole vine is being cut away. But there is an afterward—that it may bear more fruit.

One tells of a visit to a great hot-house, filled with wonderful clusters of luscious grapes. The owner said, "When my new gardener came, he said he would have nothing to do with these vines unless he could cut them clear down to the stock; and he did, and we had no grapes for two years. But this is the result." Stems and branches cut, bleeding, almost destroyed; afterward, a marvellous vine bending under its load of fruit.

It is only when we learn the truth about life that we are able to live with faith and courage. Because they have not learned it, many people fall into despair in the midst of present disappointments and sufferings. They see only the hard things in their circumstances, and pains that make the days almost unbearable, the wrongs and injustices that are



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crushing them. They stand right in the midst of all the bitter trials and see no light, no hope, no comfort. We need to learn to stand away from the immediate present and get a view of the experience from a remoter distance. We see only part of the experience while we are in its midst.

A visitor to Amsterdam had heard about the wonderful chimes of St. Nicholas—so the story runs. He was told that he must hear them, whatever else he might miss in the old Dutch city. The tourist did not know how best to hear the chimes, so he went up into the tower of the church to get as close as he could to the bells. He thought he would thus be best able to get the full benefit of his visit. There he found a man with great wooden gloves, like hammers, pounding on a keyboard. All he could hear was the crash of the keys, the harsh clanging and the deafening noise of the bells above his head. He wondered why his friends had talked so enthusiastically of the chimes of St. Nicholas. To his ears there was no music in them, nothing but ter-



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rible clatter and clangor. Yet at that very time there floated over and beyond the city the most entrancing music. Men in the fields a mile or more away paused in their work to listen. People in their homes and travellers on the highways were thrilled by the marvellous notes that fell from the tower. The place to listen to chimes is not close to them, but a distance away, where the clangor has softened into sweet music.

So it is with the experiences of life. When we are in their midst we hear only the jarring notes of pain, the bitter cries of suffering. "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous." We are too close to it yet. But when we get farther away, when the sharpness of the pain is past, when the hardness is over and forgotten, the music grows sweet. Not until afterward comes with its comfort, its alleviation, its peaceable fruit, its new blessing, do we begin to understand the meaning of the discipline of the experience that was so hard. Afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit.



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It is only afterward that the meaning of many of God's providences can be clearly read. Now we see through a glass darkly; afterward we shall see face to face. Now we know in part; afterward we shall know fully. The things we think destructive and calamitous are blessings yet in their first stage, fruits still green and bitter, not yet ripened and mellowed.

"*Then be content, poor heart;*
*God's plans like lilies pure and white unfold.*
*We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart,*
*Time will reveal the calyxes of gold.*
*And if, through patient toil, we reach the land*
*Where tired feet, with sandals loosed, may rest,*
*When we shall clearly see and understand,*
*I know that we will say, 'God knew the best.'*"

Life is a school. All its experiences are lessons. God is educating us. School is not easy. All true education looks to the building of the finest, noblest character in the end. It is especially so in God's school, for he is the perfect Teacher. His purpose is not to give



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us an easy time at present, but to make something of us afterward. Sometimes we chafe and fret, saying that God is harsh and severe, perhaps that he is even unkind. We cannot see that good ever can come out of the painful discipline. But there are lives which only in the school of severity can ever reach their best.

There are some plants that would die in the warmth of a conservatory. They must be kept in the cold if they would live and grow. One of the papers not long since told of a strange plant recently discovered in northern Siberia. It shoots up out of the ice and frozen ground. Its leaves grow on the side of the stem toward the north. Each leaf appears to be covered with little crystals of snow. On the third day the extremities of the anthers show minute glistening specks like diamonds. These are the seeds.

Is not this plant an illustration of many Christian lives? God seems to set them in beds of ice and snow, and yet they grow up out of the wintry cold into fair and wondrous



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beauty. We should say that the loveliest lives of earth would be those that are reared amid the kindliest influences, under summer skies, in the warm atmosphere of ease and comfort. But the truth is that many of the noblest developments of Christian character come from the wintry gardens of hardship, struggle, and sorrow. Trial, therefore, is not something meant to discourage us, to stunt and dwarf our life and mar its beauty. The snow plant would die in a tropical garden. There are lives that never could become Christlike and never could reach heaven without the discipline of hardness. No hardness is too severe which teaches us to live worthily. "To serve God and love him," says some one, "is higher and better than happiness, though it be with wounded feet, bleeding hands, and heart loaded with sorrow."

*"So much we miss*
*If love is weak; so much we gain*
*If love is strong. God thinks no pain*
*Too sharp or lasting to ordain*
*To teach us this."*



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We must guard against the dreading of the cost of life's best things. If we cannot pay the price we cannot get the blessings. We must have the sharp, biting winter if we would get, by and by, the genial spring with its bursting blossoms. We must have the ploughshare cutting through the ground if we would have the harvest of golden grain. There is no trial in our lives that does not come to us as the bearer of good. We meet a grievous loss when we are not profited by the hard or painful experience that comes to us. We cannot see this to-day. It seems to us in the keenness of our sorrow that nothing which may come in any afterward will make up for what we are now suffering. But if not in this life, then somewhere in the great eternal afterward we shall be able to say: "Now I understand." "All chastening seemeth for the present grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit."

Remember Joseph. He was cruelly wronged by his brothers, torn away from his home, sold as a slave, maligned and cast into chains



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—a dark beginning, surely, for a young man's life. Yet afterward came honor, power, glory. It takes time to work out God's best things. There is a story of a rabbi who met a child carrying a basket closely covered. "Tell me, little maid," said the rabbi, "what you have in that basket." The child answered, "If my mother had wished that any one should know what is in this basket, she would not have covered it up." If God had meant us to know all his plans of love for us, he would not have covered them up under experiences of pain and suffering. We may be sure, however, that for all our times of chastening and trial there is an afterward, full of glorious good, waiting for us.

We miss a great deal by living so entirely in the present and not having ourselves to think of the afterward. We are alarmed when we find ourselves in hard conditions and circumstances, forgetting altogether that these are only processes through which we must pass to reach fineness of character, sweetness of spirit, strength, courage, discipline, and all



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the qualities which go to make up the best life. We are too short-sighted when we are in trouble. We see only the suffering, the loss, the struggle, and think not of the mission of the trouble and what is coming out of it. We should widen our vision so as to take in the afterward as well as the present hour.

Life is all one piece. One experience follows another. God always loves us—loves us just as surely and as tenderly, when all things seem to be against us as he does when all things seem to be favoring us. When trouble comes, no matter what its direct and natural cause, it has a mission—it comes to make us better, to cure us of some fault, to cleanse us of some blot, to make us gentler, to teach us to be trustful and strong, to make us more thoughtful and more helpful. Instead of vexing and fretting ourselves with the question how God can truly love us and yet allow us to suffer, to endure loss, to be treated unjustly and wrongfully, we would better change our attitude altogether toward our



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trials and ask rather what errand this pain or affliction has for us, what it should teach us, what change it should work in us.

There is no trial in our lives that does not come to us as the bearer of a blessing. We meet a grievous loss when we are not profited by any hard or painful experience that comes to us. The other morning one told of an unhappiness which came from the loss of a friend—not by death, but by the friend's unfaithfulness. Well, it is hard when one has to lose out of one's life such a friend, who for years has seemed to be true and whose friendship has come to mean so much of strength, of companionship, of joy; but there will be an afterward, and we may be sure that when the afterward has opened its treasures into the lonely life, it will be seen that God is good and loving in just what he did. You do not know what poison was hidden in the cup you thought was filled to the brim with happiness. God took it out of your hand to save you from a deeper, bitterer sorrow than that which you are now enduring.



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## Nevertheless Afterward

You cannot see this to-day. It seems to you in the keenness of your sorrow that nothing that may come in afterward will make up for what you have lost. But trust God with that. The future is long. It stretches away into the eternal years. If not in this life, then somewhere in the great eternal Afterward you will be able to say: "Now I understand."

*"When the last day is ended,*
*And the nights are through;*
*When the last sun is buried*
*In its grave of blue;*

*"When the stars are snuffed like candles,*
*And the seas no longer fret,*
*When the winds unlearn their cunning,*
*And the storms forget;*

*"When the last lip is palsied,*
*And the last prayer said,*
*Love shall reign immortal*
*While the worlds lie dead!"*



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# The School of Life



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*"I do not ask for place among*
*Great thinkers who have taught and sung,*
*And scorned to bend*
*Under the trifles of the hour—*
*I only would not lose the power*
*To comprehend."*

*These lessons thou dost give*
*To teach me how to live,*
*To do, to bear,*
*To get, to share,*
*To work and play,*
*And trust alway.*

—MALTIE D. BABCOCK.



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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# The School of Life

THE business of life is learning. We know nothing when we begin. On the tomb of an English historian is the inscription, "He died learning." Learning is not confined to what we get from reading books. All life is a school and books are ever being put into our hands, and lessons are set for us continually.

St. Paul tells us of one of the lessons he had learned in the school of experience. "I have learned," he said, "in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." We are glad to know that St. Paul had to learn to be contented. We are apt to get the impression that such a man as he was did not have to learn to live as common people do, that he always knew, for instance, how to be contented. Here, however, we have the confession that he had to



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learn the lesson just as we do. He did not always know the secret. Then he was well on in years when he said this, from which we conclude that it took him a good while to learn the lesson, and that it was not easy for him to do it.

There is a remarkable word in the Hebrews which tells us that even Jesus learned his lessons as we must do—he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. It was not always easy for him to do the Father's will. Even in Gethsemane we see him learning. Each time he prayed that the cup might pass the pleading was a little less intense and it was growing easier for him to submit. The fact of the truth and reality of his humanity shows us that even Christ, the Son of God, had to learn the lessons of life just as his followers must do. He learned to be content in whatsoever state he was. He learned to be patient, to suffer injustice and wrong, to endure insults and not resent them. He learned to give up, to accept unkindness quietly and return kindness instead.



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# The School of Life

We are all in Christ's school. Disciples are scholars and we are all disciples. We enter the lowest grade when we begin to be Christians. We have everything to learn. Each new experience is a new lesson set for us by the great Teacher. There will come to you tomorrow a sharp temptation. You wonder why God permits it if he loves you. Why does he let you be assailed and put to the test? He certainly does not want you to fail. Satan's purpose in bringing temptation upon us is to entice us to sin, to disobey Christ and prove disloyal to him; but that is not God's thought in permitting us to be tempted. He means the temptation to prove us and then to strengthen us and fit us for braver, better life.

It seems strange to us that Jesus had to be tempted, he of the pure soul and the sinless life. But we know that a large element in his helpfulness as our Saviour and Friend comes from his own experience of temptation. We know that he is able to help us, and deliver us in our temptations because he was tempted



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and was victorious. If he had been defeated he could not have helped us. He is able also to sympathize with us in our struggles because he endured the same. In like manner temptation met and overcome makes our lives mean more to others. One who by God's grace has kept himself unspotted from the world becomes thus a comfort and a strength to many others. One writes:

"*Sometimes the world seems black with shade and dole—*
*The grimy haunt of sin-smirched evil men;*
*Then shines the unstained whiteness of your soul,*
*And all the earth is clean and fair again.*"

One brave and valiant soul that is not smirched by the world's evil and does not fail in the testing becomes indeed a strength to many others. He has not failed and we need not fail. For others' sake, as well as for our own, we should stand firm and true in every experience of testing. If we falter and fail, others are made less strong to endure. One



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courageous man who never turns back to the foe puts courage into others and they grow strong, too. But one faint heart puts fear and dismay into many other hearts. Remembering that others will do what we do, be brave and victorious, or craven and defeated, should be in us a mighty motive to stand. Then we need not fail. We may win in the battle. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear." Each temptation is a lesson set for us by the Master, and the lesson is never too hard to learn with his help.

Sorrow is also a lesson in Christ's school. It is not an accident breaking into our life without meaning or purpose. God could prevent the coming of the sorrow if he desired. He has all power, and nothing can touch the life of any of his children unless he is willing. Since we know that God loves us and yet permits us to suffer, we may be quite sure that there is a blessing, something good, in whatever it is that brings us pain or grief. We have this in the Master's Beatitude, "Blessed



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are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." The child of a patriotic soldier had been listening to his father as he told of a great battle in which he had been engaged. As the soldier spoke of the terrific struggle the boy said, "I would have run." The father replied, "Ah, there are some things, my son, dearer than life." The cause of country was dearer to the soldier. We shrink from pain. We would run away from grief. We would refuse to accept sorrow. But there are things worth suffering for, things dearer than ease and pleasure. We learn lessons in pain which repay a thousand times the cost of our tears. Suffering is hard, grief is bitter.

To some people it seems almost cruel in Jesus Christ to say, "Blessed are they that mourn." How could he say it, they ask, if his heart is tender and loving as we claim it is? How can God permit such suffering and woe, so much grief and sorrow, as we see everywhere, if he is a God of love and of compassion as he says he is?

"If I were God," said one, "I would take



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away all pain, all grief, all suffering from the world." That is just what God is doing through the gospel of his grace and love. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes." But we must not forget what it costs to do this. Jesus wept that our tears may be dried.

"It seems to me," said another, "that if God is the compassionate being the Bible says he is, his heart would break as he looks down upon the world and beholds the pain and anguish, the injustice and wrong, which are everywhere." The answer is, "His heart did break." That is the meaning of the cross. From God's own sorrow comes blessing for the world and comfort for all sorrow.

Jesus does not say that mourning itself is blessed, is good or pleasant or beautiful. What he says is that the comfort of God is blessed, that those who mourn and receive comfort are so enriched, their lives so enlarged, so lifted up into the blessing of God's love, that they can rejoice even in their tears. A young man who for fourteen years has



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had a great sorrow in his home—his wife being an incurable sufferer—speaks of the hard years bravely and joyfully, without a word or a tone of bitterness, testifying that he owes to the burden and sorrow of these years all that is worthy and beautiful in his life. Whatever he is as a man, especially as a Christian man, is the fruit of what he has suffered. He can say that he has learned to rejoice in his pain and trial. He accepted the lesson set for him and has learned it.

An ingenious photographer has been photographing the heart of a dried teardrop, under a microscope, revealing in it myriads of forms of beauty. The Bible tells us that God preserves the tears of his children, putting them in his tear-bottle. Tears are sacred to God, because of the blessings that come through them to those who love God. In heaven those who look back on lives of pain and sorrow on the earth will find that their best lessons have come through tears.

All the Christian graces have to be learned in Christ's school. There St. Paul had learned



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contentment. He never would have learned it, however, if he had had only bounty and ease all the while. Contentment comes from learning to do without things we once supposed to be essential to our comfort. St. Paul had learned contentment through finding such fulness of blessing in Christ that he did not need any more the secondary things. Perhaps we would succeed better in learning this same grace if we had fewer of life's comforts, if sometimes we had experience of want. The continuity of blessings that flow like a river into our lives gives us no opportunity to learn contentment. We think we are very happy and grateful for our favors; but how would we behave if instead of the unbroken supply of pleasant things, we were to suffer without them for a few days; if for our splendid health we fell sick for a while; if for the happy circle of love and the sweetness of unfailing joy, sorrow came and we were bereft and lonely? Perhaps it is well that we have some dark days, that we may learn to appreciate the blue sky. There are beautiful



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things in the darkness which we never would see if there were no break in the sunshine. When sufferings come into our life, disagreeable things, hunger, want, instead of plenty, rough ways instead of flower-strewn paths, God is teaching us the lesson of contentment so that we can say at length that we have learned it.

Patience is another lesson set for us in life's school. Many of us are impatient with others. We are impatient with their slowness in learning. An English head-master used to tell how once he sharply reproved a pupil for dulness when he failed to know his lesson. The boy looked up into the teacher's face and said, conscious of the injustice he was enduring: "Why do you speak so severely to me? Indeed, sir, I am doing the very best I can." The teacher used to tell years afterward how he always had regretted his loss of patience with that boy. Great wrong is often done a child by impatience in reproving him. We should remember that it was an outbreak of impatience that kept Moses out of the prom-



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ised land. We do not know how often impatience limits our usefulness.

Impatience is often shown in hasty temper. Ruskin in a letter to girls has this good advice: "Keep sweetly calm of temper under all circumstances, recognizing the thing that is provoking or disagreeable to you as coming directly from Christ's hand. And the more it is like to provoke you thank him for it the more, as a young soldier would thank his general for trusting him with a hard place to hold on the rampart." We should always remember that when we are disposed to become vexed, to fly into a passion, to speak harshly or pettishly, a lesson has been set for us—we are to learn to keep sweet, to endure patiently. The fact that we are inclined to become impatient shows that we have not yet fully learned our lesson, and therefore it is set for us again.

Lessons are also set for us when we are sick. The doctor sends you to your room and bids you to be quiet for a season. This means a good deal more than merely being sick. Your



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sickness has some mission for you. If your minister or your friends pray for you, there are two requests they should make. One is, that you may recover in God's good time, but the still more important prayer is that the mission of the sickness may not fail, that you may come from your sick-room in due time with a new blessing in your life. When you are sick, you should ask God what the mission of your illness is to you and then ask him to teach you the lesson set for you. It is not accidental. Nor does it come purposeless. It would be a sad thing if you should get over your fever and miss the lesson which the fever was sent to teach you, or the good it came to work in you.

It gives life a new sacredness to think of it thus as a school, the school of Christ. The Master is always saying to us, "Come unto me, and learn of me." Are we learning? Some men set for themselves the rule to learn some new fact every day. Goethe says we ought every day to see at least one fine work of art, to hear one sweet strain of music, to read



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one beautiful poem. Are we learning something new in Christ's school each day? Are we adding a line of beauty every day to our character?



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# Words of Life



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*"Wisdom with its trumpet word*
*In a myriad volumes heard;*
*All which unto love belongs*
*Chanted in uncounted songs,*
*Up and down the endless ages;*
*Things divine in sacred pages—*
*As the sands of the sea-shore—*
*Taught with tongues of gold of yore;—*
*When to-morrow is to-day,*
*What can still remain to say?*
*One thing looked for—one unheard,*
*Only that unuttered word,*
*Echoes of the sense of which*
*All our spoken words enrich,*
*And shall yet, with clarion call,*
*Alter and transmute them all."*



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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

# Words of Life

HE words of Christ are not like other men's words. He says they are spirit and life. In one of his parables he speaks of his words as seeds. We know what seeds are. You may have in your hand a handful of gems—pearls, diamonds, or other precious stones. They are brilliant and beautiful. They are rare and of great value. You hold a fortune in your hand. But these are only little stones. They have no life in them. You may plant them in your garden, but they will not grow, and you will not gather any harvest from them.

Then you may take up a handful of seeds—flower-seeds, grain-seeds, seeds of trees. They have no brightness, do not shine, cannot be sold for ornaments. But they have secrets of life in them. Scatter them in your garden,



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drop them in your window-box, or plant them in the fields, and they will grow. Christ's words are seeds. They are different from other men's sayings. These may be eloquent, brilliant, wise, sparkling with beauty —gems of literature, but they have no life in them. They do not make the world any better. But the words of Christ are life. Plant them and you will have regenerated lives, sweet homes, grace and beauty in character.

It is related that when Thorwaldsen carried back from Italy the wonderful pieces of statuary which he had carved in that sunny land, the stones were wrapped in straw. They were unwrapped in the artist's garden, and the straw was scattered all about the place. Next summer, when the warm rains came, there grew up everywhere countless multitudes of flowers that never had grown there before. The seeds had been in the straw that was wrapped about the pieces of marble, and now in far-north Denmark, Italian flowers grew in great profusion and beauty.



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# Words of Life

The Bible is the word of God. It comes to us from heaven. It bears in itself heavenly seeds, seeds of the plants and trees that grow in the heavenly fields and gardens. Then, wherever the Bible is read it scatters these holy seeds, and soon the heavenly flowers and fruits are found growing on earthly soil. No other book has such power to transform and beautify lives as has the Bible. You may study the best literature, the finest poetry, the noblest philosophy; it will make you intelligent, cultured, learned, but it does not make you good; it does not put into your heart heavenly qualities; it does not make you loving, unselfish, kind, gentle; it does not send you forth to minister to others in need. But those who study the word of God daily, continuously, reverently, prayerfully, and meditate on its teachings, are transformed in character. The words that Jesus spoke are spirit and are life.

One of the Psalms gives us a wonderful picture of the effects wrought by the word of God. It finds the soul marred, stained, hurt,



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and restores it unto the beauty of God. It makes the simple wise. It puts joy into the heart. It enlightens the eyes. It is more precious than finest gold. It is sweeter than the droppings of the honeycomb. It warns against dangers. There is great reward in obeying it.

The Bible is the most wonderful of all books. All we know about God we learn from it. Yet some people seem almost ashamed to confess that they read this great book at all, as if it were an indication of weakness of mind. They are not ashamed to be caught reading Shakespeare, or Tennyson, or Bacon, or even an off-color novel. But they do not like any one to see them with a Bible in their hands. They want to be considered wise in science, along intellectual lines, in literature, in the wisdom of this world. It never occurs to them that the Bible is able to make them wise as no other book or books ever written can do. There really is no other book in the world that contains so much profound wisdom. It tells us about God. It pictures the whole



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truth about men. It holds for us the key to all mystery. It tells us how to live and how to die.

The words of life rejoice the heart. There is a legend of the discovery of a strange harp amid some Egyptian ruins. It was ancient and remarkable, but there was no music in it. As we study the Bible we have in our hands a harp which at once begins to give out the sweetest songs. This is a sad world. It has many sorrows. Life is full of mysteries and perplexities. Science, philosophy, poetry, art, have no secret of joy for us, can tell us of no way to be glad and happy. But the words of the Lord rejoice the heart. There is no grief for which the Bible does not have a comfort. There is no sorrow which it cannot turn into joy.

The words of life give comfort. A book with no comfort for those in trouble would not meet the needs of the great mass of men and women. You may not need consolation just to-day, and you may almost grow impatient when in reading the Bible you come upon



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word after word meant to give cheer and uplifting. "This means nothing to me," you say. "I have no need of comfort." But perhaps the heart of the person next to you is crying out for some consoling word and would be bitterly disappointed if the holy book had only ethical precepts, lessons of duty, and urgent exhortations, with no words of tenderness, nothing to soothe grief. If the Bible were not a book of comfort it would not be loved as it is. A noted preacher, in reviewing his long pastorate, said that if he were beginning again his pastoral work, there were several things he would do which he had not done. One of these was that he would preach more comfortingly. A great many preachers, when they look back from the end of their ministry, seeing all things then in the light of eternity, will regret that they did not preach more comfortingly.

One of the most pathetic things one sees in going about among sorrowing ones is, how many people shut their eyes to the light and joy which the Bible offers to them, and their



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ears to the glorious and blessed consolations which are spoken to them. One writes:

*"That little sunbeam, which so softly came*
*And crept in through the shutters of your room,*
*To-day, in letters beautiful, these words*
*With golden pencil traced upon the gloom:*

*"'You think me beautiful, and fondly love*
*My little light. Why, then, throw open wide*
*Those gloomy shutters, for a great bright*
*World of sunshine lingers just outside.'*

*"That little joy that stole unconsciously*
*Into your weary soul and thrilled anew*
*Your flagging energies one transient moment,*
*Said, 'There is a whole long life like this for you.'"*

There is a great skyful of light that waits to flood our hearts, and we shut it all out but a few half-dimmed rays that steal in through a broken pane. There is an infinitude of comfort that longs to come to us to fill our life, and we receive only a word or two of it, keep-



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ing our great world of sorrow unconsoled. Why should we so rob ourselves when God longs to give us such measurelessness of comfort? He does not want us to go grieving through this world when there is such boundless consolation waiting at our doors.

The words of life build up character. The great business of life is to grow into the beauty of Christ and to learn to do the will of God. In this, nothing but the divine words will avail. St. Paul exhorts us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. We are to *let* it dwell—so then we can hinder it from abiding with us, we can shut it out from our lives, if we will. We can shut it out; we must open the doors willingly, if it is to be admitted. Then it is to dwell in us. To dwell is to stay. It is not enough to let it come into our hearts for a moment, and then go out, like a bird that flees in at your window, sings a snatch of song and then flies away again. The divine word must make its home with us, in us.

All the Bible is valuable, has its place in fashioning our character and making our



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life. St. Paul says that every Scripture inspired of God is profitable. God never inspired a word that will not be profitable in its place and at its time. Every inspired Scripture is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in right living. Some people think there are certain portions of the Scriptures which cannot be of any profit. Of course there are degrees of value in different portions. We would not say that a chapter of hard names in Chronicles is as spiritually profitable as a chapter in one of the Gospels. Yet a good old woman used to stumble over the hard genealogical lists she came upon, trying to pronounce them and then to remember them. She said she would be dreadfully ashamed to meet these people in heaven and not know their names.

Some one gives this incident. In a Christian home, not long since, the mother asked her son, a young man, a church member, where his Bible was. He replied, with some confusion: "I don't know, mother. I guess it is



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in my trunk up in the store-room." Turning to her daughter the mother asked: "Where is your Bible, Mary?" The girl replied: "I am not sure, mother. I think it is upstairs in one of my bureau drawers." Of what use were these Bibles in the lives of those who possessed them? Does any one live better because he has a Bible in the store-room, or upstairs in the bureau drawer?

The old Testament tells a story of a lost Bible. It had been lost for a good while—lost, too, in the temple. Things were going sadly wrong in those days, and the book got lost. They were repairing the temple, however, and one day somebody came upon the lost book. The king and the priests began to read it, and, strange to say, began to weep. They found that they had been sinning greatly because they had not been reading the book to learn what God's will for them was. So they repented and began again to read the holy words and to do the things they were commanded to do, and there was a revival. Would it not be a blessed thing



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if we would all search our store-rooms, trunks, book-cases, and bureau drawers and find every lost Bible and begin to read what God says to his children?

The words of Christ living in us will start songs. Those who have the gift of song are wondrously dowered. Not all of us, however, can sing to the pleasure and edification of others. But we may all make our lives songs. St. Paul dwells much on joy as an invariable quality of the Christian life. The word of Christ living in a man puts psalms and hymns into his lips and life. The life of Christ was the ideal life. He never failed in any way. He never got discouraged. He was never impatient. He never complained or murmured. He never fretted or worried. He never was disagreeable, however much people annoyed him. He never showed hurt feeling. He was never afraid, never yielded to temptation.



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# Presenting Men Perfect



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*"Let me to-day do something that shall take*
*A little sadness from the world's vast store,*
*And may I be so favored as to make*
*Of joy's too scanty sum a little more.*

*"Let me not hurt, by any selfish deed*
*Or thoughtless word, the heart of foe or friend,*
*Nor would I pass, unseeing, worthy need,*
*Or sin by silence where I should defend.*

*"However meagre is my worldly wealth,*
*Let me give something that shall aid my kind,*
*A word of courage or a thought of health,*
*Dropped as I pass for troubled hearts to find."*



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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

# Presenting Men Perfect

WE are each others' keeper in a more serious sense than we think. When a new friend is given to us we come under very sacred obligation to do him good, not evil, to guard his interests, to seek to be a blessing to him in every way. St. Paul said his aim was to present every man perfect in Christ. He was looking on to the end of his ministry. He saw in every person he met or knew one for whom he must give account, whom he must bring to Christ at last in spotless beauty. Every Christian must likewise present spotless and perfect before Christ those who are committed to his keeping.

We are responsible for our failures in duty to each other. A man rushed into his pastor's study one morning, in great distress, and



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said, "Oh, sir, my daughter is dead, and she must tell God that she never heard a prayer in her father's house." He was startled to remember that he had done nothing to prepare his own child for appearing before God. Are there not many persons who fail in this duty? The same responsibility rests on each one of us in his own measure regarding every life that comes within our reach or influence, in his own home and without.

St. Paul wished to see certain persons in Rome, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift. He also exhorts us to speak to others in our conversation only words that will minister grace to them, start in their minds and hearts thoughts of good, of purity, of love, inspiring them to better things. Even amid the idle, playful talk of our lighter conversation, we should say some earnest word that may be remembered, and that may do good. All our influence upon others, upon every other person whom our life touches, should be such as will put upon them touches of beauty and help in some way



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to fit them for coming at last perfect into God's presence.

Perfection must be thought of in two phases —negative and positive. It should be unspotted, without blemish, but it must also fill up the measure of its capacity. We are not to be unkind, but we are also to be kind. It is not enough to wash a bulb and to make it clean; the bulb must also be developed, until its hidden beauty is brought out. Perfection is not merely making a life white; it means also the bringing out of all the life's powers and capacities until they reach their best. The one-talented man in the parable brought back his talent perfect — unwasted, full-weight, bright and shining, but he was condemned as wicked and slothful, because he had kept it hidden and had not used it. The capacity was not squandered, not a particle of it, but it had gained nothing. The men who were commended that day were those who had traded with their talents, making the two become four, and the five multiply to ten.



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We do not know how many strings there are in our harp that have never yet given out a musical note or a bar of song, which might be made to give forth most sweet and inspiring melody. There is a story of Ole Bull, the great violinist, and John Ericsson, the inventor. They were old friends, but the musician could not get the inventor to listen to his violin. All he thought about was machines. He had no time for music. He did not know there was any music in his soul. Ole Bull then prepared a little ruse, and one day took his violin to Ericsson, asking him to mend it —something had gone wrong with it, he said. Then, to test it, after the mending, Ole Bull drew the bow lightly over the strings, and soon the most marvellous notes filled the office. Ericsson sat amazed, entranced, and begged the musician to play on. "I never knew before that I cared for music," he said. It was the discovery of a power and faculty in his soul which, until now, had been sleeping.

We do not dream what capacities of ours are



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lying undeveloped, useless, unawaked, like music in a sleeping harp. It is said that there are millions of dollars in this country hoarded up, hidden in chinks of walls, wrapped in bags, secreted in cellars, or buried in old kettles, not doing any good, not increasing by being traded with. Think, too, of the gifts, talents, and powers of life, lying hidden in people's brains, hands, tongues, and hearts, not being used in any way to enrich the world, to add to its beauty, to give joy and comfort. Think of yourself, of the splendid capacities in you, which are not being developed. You are responsible not merely for being a respectable sort of person; you are called and required to be perfect, to have all your gifts and capacities developed to their best and highest degree.

St. Paul thought much of this matter of responsibility for others. When we begin to understand what life means, we see that we have a responsibility for helping to make every one perfect in Christ. That is the central meaning of the lesson of missions. Jesus,



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before he went away, bade his followers to go and make disciples of all the nations. We have a duty to every human being under heaven. We are to love him and do everything we can to bring him to Christ. If we find our neighbor fallen by the wayside, hurt, we are to stop, no matter how busy we are, how hurried, nor how many other duties we have in hand, and relieve him. If he is hungry, we are to feed him. If he is thirsty, we are to give him drink. If we come upon him sick and do not minister unto him, if he comes to our door as a stranger, and we turn him away, we have failed in our duty of love to him.

But our responsibility does not end with our ministries to men's physical needs. We are our brother's keeper in every sense. We are to seek to make every man perfect in his life and character. We are never to do anything to hurt another, taking this also in its broadest sense, referring to bodily injury, to the marring of the mind, or to spiritual harm. A careless nurse seventy years ago let the



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baby fall, and for all the years since a man with a crippled body has been going about the streets, a mere wreck of what he might have been. From an incompetent and inexperienced teacher a number of years since a boy received defective and false teaching, and his career has been spoiled, his usefulness diminished, his standing among his fellows hurt. Those who know him best say that the warping and hurting of his life by his teacher are responsible in a large measure for his failure.

Some fifteen or twenty years since a beautiful girl, who had been brought up in a Christian home, had given herself to Christ and was beginning a consecrated Christian life, fell under the influence, for a single summer, of a relative who called himself an agnostic. She was in this man's home and listened to his insinuating words. He laughed at her mother's teachings about God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, and prayer. He professed to pity the girl's delusions, and spoke to her in a sceptical way until her mind became filled with



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doubts and questions. When she returned to her home, at the end of the summer, her childhood's simple faiths had become full of doubts and questions. Was there really any one to hear her when she prayed? Was there a Father anywhere who cared for her or would help her? Was the Bible really the word of God? Her old simple trust was gone, her peace and joy were gone.

These are illustrations of the ways in which lives are continually hurt by others, in body, in mind, in spirit. Instead of harming others in any way, it is our duty to seek in all ways the highest good of every other. Jesus speaks of the causing of one of his little ones to stumble as the worst of crimes. This puts a great burden of responsibility upon mothers and fathers to whose hands God intrusts little children to be sheltered and guarded, to be trained and taught, to be influenced and brought up. Suppose they mar their lives and teach them mistaken things about the meaning of life! Think of the sin of him who leaves a blot on a fair young life. Think of the crime



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of him who becomes a tempter of innocence, who leaves ruin in the temple of an immortal soul!

We sometimes try to evade our responsibility for this guarding and training of others' lives. We say this is Christ's work, not ours. It is Christ's—he only can keep any one from injury, from hurtful things in the world. But we are coworkers with Christ. He uses our hands, our hearts, and our words in putting upon other lives the touches of immortal beauty that he would have them wear. We may not leave Christ out in anything we would do for any other. "We might just as well leave out the sun in the making of a garden as leave out Christ in the making of a life." Education, moral influences, refinement, ethical teachings, all are pitifully inadequate alone. There must be the impact of divine grace and love upon our lives in and through whatever any human touch and influence may do. "What the sun is to the rose-bush," said the poet, "Jesus Christ is to my life."

Yet the fact that Christ himself is the real



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power in all the keeping and perfecting of lives is only half the truth. He works through the mother, the teacher, the friend. Some one was trying to impress a boy with the fact that God gave him all his blessings and did for him all the good things that meant so much to his life. The boy answered hesitatingly and thoughtfully, "Yes, but mothers help a lot." He was right—mothers help a lot. God largely does his work for the boys through mothers. They are his coworkers. All who love Christ are called to be his helpers. The work is Christ's, but the responsibility is ours. Our hands must do the duty. Our lips must speak the word. We are our brother's keeper, though only Christ can really keep him. Ours must be the watching, the praying, the counsel.

One of the common mistakes in Christian life is in putting upon God responsibility which belongs to us. Many persons fail to realize the truth of the necessary cooperation of the human with the divine. Christ made the redemption—no human power could have done



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this—and then sent out his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature. Many good people are deeply and compassionately interested in the saving and helping of others, but fail to understand that they have anything themselves to do in the matter. So they take it to God in prayer, asking him to bring back this wandering one, to incline this careless one to thoughtfulness, to interest this indolent one in Christian service, to keep this heedless one from stumbling. It is right to pray, but if we do nothing else the prayer will not avail. Only God can do the things we long to have done, yet not God alone—God and we.

*"The Lord Christ wanted a tongue one day*
*To speak a message of cheer*
*To a heart that was weary and worn and sad,*
*And weighed with a mighty fear.*
*He asked me for mine, but 'twas busy quite*
*With my own affairs from morn till night.*

*"The Lord Christ wanted a hand one day*
*To do a loving deed;*



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*He wanted two feet, on an errand for him*
*To run with gladsome speed.*
*But I had need of my own that day;*
*To his gentle beseeching I answered, 'Nay!'*

*"So all that day I used my tongue,*
*My hands, and my feet as I chose;*
*I said some hasty, bitter words*
*That hurt one heart, God knows.*
*I busied my hands with worthless play,*
*And my wilful feet went a crooked way.*

*"And the dear Lord Christ—was his work undone*
*For lack of a willing heart?*
*Only through men does he speak to men?*
*Dumb must he be apart?*
*I do not know, but I wish to-day*
*I had let the Lord Christ have his way."*



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# As I Have Loved You



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*"In the long run all love is paid by love;*
*Though undervalued by the hosts of earth,*
*The great eternal government above*
*Keeps strict account, and will redeem its worth.*
*Give thy love freely; do not count its cost;*
*So beautiful a thing was never lost,*
*In the long run."*

*"The man who wins is the man who stays*
*In the unsought paths and the rocky ways,*
*And, perhaps, who lingers, now and then,*
*To help some failure to rise again.*
*Ah, he is the man who wins!"*



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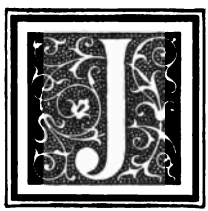
## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

# As I Have Loved You



ESUS called his commandment of love a new commandment. Why new? There was an old commandment which ran, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Some people suppose that this is the same as the commandment Jesus gave to his disciples. But there are two differences. The old commandment refers to your neighbor, that is, to everybody; the new refers to your brother, that is, your fellow-Christian. The other difference is in the measure of the love—"As thyself"; "as I have loved you." The world never knew what love meant until Jesus came and lived among men. "As thyself," leaves self and others side by side; "as I have loved you," carries us away beyond that, for Jesus made a sacrifice of himself in loving his disciples.



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This lesson touches our lives at very practical points. It is not enough for a Christian to be a glib, fluent, golden-mouthed talker. "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal." It is not enough for a Christian to be a great teacher, understanding all mysteries and all knowledge—if he has not love, he is nothing. If a man is a great benefactor and if he even becomes a martyr, giving his body to be burned, and has not love, all counts for nothing.

"Love suffereth long, and is kind." That is, it bears patiently with others' faults, their unkindnesses to us, their ill treatment and ingratitude, and is kind. That is, it continues to be kind in spite of the unkindness it may receive. The trouble with too many of us is that our kindness is spasmodic, is shown only when we feel like it, and is checked continually by things that happen. But nothing ever stopped the flow of Christ's kindness—nothing ever should check the flow of a Christian's kindness.



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Take another line from St. Paul's picture. "Love . . . doth not behave itself unseemly." That is, it never forgets itself, is never rude, is not supercilious. Haughtiness is unseemly. All uncharitableness is unseemly. Nothing is more remarkable in the story of Christ's life than his unfailing respect for people. He seemed to have almost reverence for every one that came before him, even the poorest, the lowest, the worst. The reasons were that He loved every one, and that He saw in each the glorious possibilities of heavenly sonship. If we had our Master's lofty regard for, and his deep interest in the lives of men, we would never act in an unseemly way toward even the unworthiest. A poet said he would never have for his friend that man who would needlessly set his foot upon a worm. If it becomes us to treat so considerately, so almost reverently, a worm, how should we treat even the poorest, the lowliest, who wears the divine image, is a child of God and is "but a little lower than God"?

A newspaper recently gave an account of a



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new society. A good woman boarding in a New England town one summer, learned that a charitable and kindly feeling was almost universal among the people of the town. She found that they all belonged to a Take Heed Society, and had all pledged themselves to three things—to speak no unkind words, to think no unkind thoughts, and to do no unkind deeds. This society never met in a body, it had no officers, paid no dues, assessed no fines. There was a fine mentioned in the pledge, but this was to be imposed by the offending person upon himself if he ever violated the rules of the organization. He was to fix his own fine, making it as large as he was able to pay, and the fine was to be paid, not to some treasurer, but to the first poor and needy person he met. It might be worth while to start such a society in some families, in some boarding-houses, in circles of friends, and even in some churches. It might help much in getting the law of love wrought into every-day life.

"Love is not provoked." That is, it does not



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become vexed or irritated at what another may do or say. Yet many people seem to overlook this line of the picture. Nothing is more common than ill temper. Some people get provoked even at things. One tells of seeing a boy the other day in a great rage at his bicycle, from which he had fallen, and beating the machine unmercifully. A man awkwardly stumbled over a chair, and flew into a violent passion, kicking the chair all about the room. No other infirmity is so often confessed as bad temper. Many people will tell you that they find no other fault in themselves so hard to overcome. Nor do they seem ashamed to make the confession, and apparently do not consider the fault a serious one. Sometimes it is spoken of apologetically, as an infirmity of nature, a family failing, a matter of temperament, certainly not a fault to be taken seriously, nor anything more than a matter of regret. Ill temper has been called the vice of the virtuous. Men and women whose characters are noble, whose lives are beautiful in every other way, have this one fault—they



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are sensitive, touchy, easily ruffled, easily hurt.

But we make a grave mistake when we let ourselves think that bad temper is a mere trifling weakness. It is a most disfiguring blemish. Jesus set for us the perfect model of living, and he was never provoked. We cannot find a single mention of his becoming even ruffled in temper. He never lost his calmness, his repose of mind, his peace of heart. In all his life of persecution, wrong, mocking, and injustice he never once was provoked. He would have us live the same life. He promises to us his peace. When he bids us love one another as he has loved us, this certainly is part of what he means.

Loving one another as Christ loves us makes it easier for others to live and work with us. A minister tells of some persons in his church who are excellent workers, full of zeal and energy, always doing things, ever active, but he says they have always to draw in shafts—they will not drive double. There are horses of this kind; they will not pull in a team,



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but have to be driven single. It seems there are people who have the same infirmity. They want to do good, but they must do it by themselves. They will not work with another person. There is a kind of carriage with only two wheels and a seat for one. It is suggestively called a sulky, because the rider rides alone. But the love of Christ teaches us a better way. We need to learn to think of others, those with whom we are united in Christian life and work. It is so in all associated life. It is so in marriage. When two lives are brought together in close relations, after having lived hitherto separately, it is evident that both cannot have their own way in everything. There is not room for any two people to have their own way in the marriage relation. They are now one, occupying only the place of one, and they must live as one. There must either be the entire displacement of one by the other, the losing of the individuality of one in that of the other, the giving up of one to the other, or else there must be the blending of the two lives in one life. The lat-



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ter is the true marriage. Both die, the one to the other. Love unites them, and they are no longer twain, but now one—"two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one."

The same principle should prevail in Christian life and work. Headstrong individualism should be softened and modified by love. Jesus sent forth his disciples by two and two. Two working together are better than two working separately. One is strong in one point and weak in another; the second is strong where the first is weak, and thus the two supplement each other. St. Paul speaks of certain Christians as yokefellows. Yokefellows draw together patiently and steadily, two necks under the same yoke, two hearts pouring their love and fellowship into the one service. None of us should insist upon always having our own way. In community of counsel there is wisdom. Jesus says that where two agree in prayer, there is more power in the pleading, and the prayer will be surer of answer.



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We know the importance in Christian life of being pleasant to live with and work with. It never should be said of us that other people cannot work with us. The secret of being agreeable yokefellows is love. This means self-losing, self-forgetfulness. The Christian who is always wanting to have positions of prominence, to be chairman or president or secretary, first in something, has not caught the spirit of the love of Christ, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Love never demands the first place—it works just as enthusiastically and faithfully at the foot of a committee as at the head of it. It works humbly, seeking counsel of the other members, and not asserting its opinion as the only wise one. It seeks in honor to prefer the other, rather than self. It is content to be overlooked, set aside, if only Christ is exalted. It is patient with the faults of fellow-workers. It strives in all ways to have the Master the real leader in all work. "Love one another as I have loved you," is the command of Christ. If we love thus we will sacrifice any-



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thing, everything, that the Master's name may never suffer dishonor.

This lesson calls us to a love like Christ's in building up his kingdom. He loved and gave himself; we must love and give ourselves. We can be saved only by a sacrificial love. We can serve Christ and our fellow-men only in sacrificial service. "As I have loved you," means loving to the uttermost, loving unto the end. We must give our lives for the brethren, as Christ gave his life for us. We must stop at no cost, no effort, no sacrifice, in helping another, in lifting up a life. This love to which Christ calls us is a love that is not affected by the character or the past life of the person we love. To love as Christ loved is to love the worst, the least worthy, to love them until they are lifted up, cleansed, and transfigured.

To love as Christ loved is to get his love into our own lives, to learn to live as he lived, in gentleness, in patience, in humility, in kindness, in endurance, in all sweetness of spirit, in all helpfulness and self-denial. It is not



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easy, but it was not easy for Christ to love as he did. The trouble with too much of what we call love is that it costs nothing, is only a sort of gilded selfishness, is not ready to sacrifice anything, to give up, to suffer, to endure. Oh! profane not the holy name by calling such life as this love. To love as Christ loves is to repeat Christ's sacrifice continually, in serving, forgiving, bearing, enduring, that others may be helped, blessed, saved.

That is the love that we are to have in our homes, in our friendships, in our business relations, in our companionships, in our neighborhood life. Yes, it costs—you must give up things and pleasures you greatly want. You must make sacrifices. But have you ever thought that nothing is love at all which will not sacrifice?



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# The Beauty of Christ



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*"I would be true for there are those who trust me;*
*I would be pure, for there are those who care;*
*I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;*
*I would be brave, for there is much to dare.*

*"I would be friend of all—the foe—the friendless;*
*I would be giving and forget the gift;*
*I would be humble, for I know my weakness;*
*I would look up—and laugh—and love—and lift."*

—HOWARD ARNOLD WALTER.



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## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

# The Beauty of Christ

E have no picture of Christ. There are many pictures of him which artists have painted, some of which are wondrously winning. But these are only men's conceptions of him whose life is so loving, so pure, so gracious, so true. And after all, it is not his human face whose beauty we are to seek to get into our lives, but the inner, spiritual grace, the disposition, the qualities of mind and heart.

Perhaps we do not think enough of beauty of character and disposition in forming our conception of Christian life. It is one thing to stand up among men and say, "I am a Christian," and another thing to grow into the loveliness of Christ. Yet the latter is as important as the former. One may be altogether sincere in confessing Christ, may have come



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out honestly on Christ's side, and yet be full of faults, only a beginner, having everything of Christian duty yet to learn, and all the beautiful qualities of Christian character yet to acquire.

St. Paul tells us that we ought to have in us the mind which was in Christ Jesus. That is, we are to be like Christ, to have the same spirit, the same temper and disposition, the same principles. The life of Christ as people saw it must be the pattern of our lives.

We can learn what were the qualities of Christ's life by a study of the Gospels. These little books not only tell us about Christ, of the facts of his life, the works he did, the words he spoke—they also show us his sympathy, his kindness, his helpfulness, how he lived, how he endured his contacts with people, how he bore enmity and wrong treatment, unkindness, persecution.

One thing which St. Paul emphasizes as a characteristic of the mind that is in Christ Jesus is a spirit of love among Christians. They should live together in peace, in true



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fellowship. People differ in their temperaments. They have varying opinions on many subjects. Their tastes are not the same. Their circumstances are unlike. It is not easy for Christian people with such diverse lives to live together always in unity. The church at Philippi seems to have been peculiarly happy in the harmony of its people, but even in this church there were differences which marred somewhat the perfectness of the fellowship. Two women are named who in some way had fallen apart in their relations. Formerly they had labored together in love, but something had happened and they had become estranged. This difference between them was a blemish on the fair name of the church. Quarrels between Christians always sadly mar the spirit of a church. Those who love Christ should never fail to live together in love. We should not insist on always having our own way. Perhaps the other person's way is as good as ours. Even if it is not as good, it will probably do less harm to take it than to have our way prevail at the cost of contention and hurt



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feeling. We must be of one accord, of one mind, if we would have the divine blessing on our work.

St. Paul speaks with great earnestness on behalf of unity among Christian people. "If there is anything in the religion of Christ," he says, "I implore you to be of the same mind, to have the same love, to be of one accord." We know what it is to listen to discordant music, instruments not tuned to one chord, singers not singing in harmony. The discords grate painfully on a sensitive ear. So are wrangles, strifes, and contentions to a sensitive heart. Think how differences among Christians, quarrels, bitter enmities, hatreds, must grieve Christ's great heart of love in heaven.

One of the reasons St. Paul gives why the good women at Philippi should drop their contention is that they may help make full his joy. Their strife grieved him. Pastors who have gentle hearts understand this. Quarrels among their people give them sleepless nights. No sweeter joy comes to a faithful pastor



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than that which comes from knowing that his people are living and working together in love. "Make full my joy," cries this gentle-hearted pastor, from his far prison at Rome, "by getting together, by being of the same mind."

One writes of an artist with a quick eye for lights and colors, sitting one day in a cheerless room on the north side of a hotel. He was alone, far from home, and somewhat forlorn. As he sat and brooded that day, he noticed occasional flashings of sunlight coming through his window and falling upon the wall and ceiling of the room. He could not understand whence these flashes could come. He looked out, and presently saw a flock of pigeons flying in the air. The dim flashes of sunlight that he saw in his room were reflections from the birds' bright wings as they flew through the air. St. Paul was now in prison at Rome. His friends, away at Philippi, could flash joy into his dungeon to brighten the gloom. They could do it by loving each other. "Make full my joy that ye be



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of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

With very deep earnestness St. Paul lingers upon this subject. "Doing nothing through faction or vainglory." Faction is a quarrelsome spirit, a disposition to think too highly of one's self, to desire to rule, to have one's own way, not to yield to others, to claim a preeminence. Elsewhere the apostle urges Christians to be tenderly affectioned one to another, in honor preferring one another. If we would keep this spirit in our hearts we should never assert our opinion too persistently. Others may as well be right as we. We do not have all the wisdom, at least, if other people are obstinate and unreasonable, that does not give us a right to be obstinate and unreasonable too. Now is the time when we are specially to keep sweet. Sometimes we are advised in the interest of peace, when our friend is out of sorts and disposed to be exacting or disagreeable, to take special pains to be unusually good-natured and agreeable, making it impossible that there should be any



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friction between us. If other people are hard to live with, we must seek to be particularly cordial and genial. The best Christian is always the one who will bear the most and keep the sweetest.

Another element in the mind of Christ is humility. "In lowliness of mind each counting the other better than himself." It is not easy to do this. We are apt to think we are wiser than others. Perhaps we are older, or have had longer experience. Or we have had a better education, or we are more talented, or we occupy a higher position. But these may not be infallible tests. God may speak through the other, the humbler person, as well as through us. We know something of our own faults; we do not know the other person's inner life, and we are forbidden to judge.

But suppose we are really wiser and better—that will not give us a right to assert our superiority, to take the higher places and thrust our neighbors down to lower places. Humility reaches its best when it is ready to serve the lowliest. *Noblesse oblige* is its law.



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If a man is better than his neighbor, why, he is to do the more for his neighbor. Jesus showed us the spirit of humility when he, conscious of his own divine glory, knowing that he was come from God and was going to God, performed the lowliest service man could perform, for those who were immeasurably less worthy than he was. Superiority means obligation. The greatest have the most to give, and the best have the largest power to help.

The lesson is a large one. We are to seek to have our life in every way like Christ's. That is what it is to have in us the mind that was in Christ. It is to have the same love, the same interest in people, the same spirit of condescension and service. We cannot too often repeat the lesson of love as St. Paul wrote it for us:

"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; bear-



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eth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

These words tell us what the mind of Christ is. They were transcribed from Christ's own life. He suffered long and was kind. He never had an unkind, proud, or envious thought in his heart. He loved on through all wrong and unkindness. Love in his breast never became embittered. We cannot too often study the life of Christ to see how he lived. He was always gentle. No line in all the story of his life tells us of his ever being rude or discourteous. He never treated anyone unkindly. He never tired of helping others. In the mind of Christ there was infinite gentleness.

In the way Jesus helped others he showed the graciousness of his power. There is a way of doing good that is arrogant and supercilious. Some people are glad to give relief and to do favors, but they lack delicacy, and do their kindnesses in a way that gives pain to sensitive hearts. But the mind of Christ shows us how to do good in gracious ways—humbly, sweetly, beautifully.



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"Thorns are only leaves that have failed to grow, through excessive heat, or lack of water, or other unfavorable conditions." Thorns were meant to be leaves, bright, beautiful, useful, but they got a wrong touch and turned out sharp, cruel, and offensive. It is the same with some people's helpful acts—they were meant to be beautiful, to feed the hunger of hearts, to comfort sorrow, to cheer discouragement, to bless men; but they have missed their graciousness. Instead of being green leaves, they are thorns, and give pain to those they touch.

There is also perverted service. Here is a man who has the reputation of being generous, whose gifts to beneficence are widely announced from time to time; but it is known to those who are familiar with his private life that he has a sister living in abject poverty, to whom he shows no kindness whatever. Recently it was announced in the papers that a young woman had entered a sisterhood, devoting her life to it by a solemn vow, who in doing so left behind her an invalid sister with



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no one to care for her, and a brother with a family of little children and no one to do love's duty for them. This girl saw no absurdity in abandoning these members of her own family who needed her so sorely, in order to enter a public institution in the name of religion, and devote herself to what is called a consecrated life. Many times is like inconsistency committed by others. The duty that is right by their hand, that is theirs, too, by every sanction human and divine, is neglected, while they go far away to seek something that is not their duty at all.

Some one says, "Every village has among its residents the man who is ready to lend a hand in local celebrations, to hoe in a neighbor's garden, mend a gate for a neighbor, or split kindlings for his neighbor's wife, but who leaves his own garden choked with weeds, his own gate off the hinges, his own wife to make out the best she can with her kindlings without his aid." Not thus did our Master give out his life in service of love. He never withheld his hand from human need, but he did



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not neglect his own mother in caring for the needs of other homes. He did first duties first. We are to have this mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus.

It is the mind of Christ we are exhorted to have in us. It is not enough to pick out little lovely things here and there in his life and imitate them, as one might tie bunches of leaves and flowers on a dead branch to give it the semblance of life.

There is a suggestive story or legend of Leonardo da Vinci. When his great picture, the "Last Supper," was finished, it is said there was much discussion among the monks as to which detail was the best. One suggested this and another that. At length they all agreed that the best feature was the painting of the table-cloth with its fine drawing and rich coloring. The artist was grieved as he heard what they said. It had been his wish to make the face of the Master so far the most winsome feature that it would instantly and overpoweringly attract every eye to itself. But now his friends praised the table-cloth and



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said nothing of the Master's face. Taking his brush, he blotted from the canvas every thread of the cloth, that the blessed face alone might win the adoration of all beholders. Let it be so with us. Whatever draws any eye or heart away from Christ, let us blot out. "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus."



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# The Law of Sacrifice



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*"Tired! well, what of that?*
*Didst fancy life was spent on beds of ease,*
*Fluttering the rose leaves scattered by the breeze?*
*Come! rouse thee, work while it is called to-day!*
*Coward, arise—go forth upon the way!*

*"Hard! Well, and what of that?*
*Didst fancy life one summer holiday*
*With lessons none to learn and naught but play?*
*Go, get thee to thy task; conquer or die!*
*It must be learned,—learn it then patiently."*



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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

# The Law of Sacrifice

E are taught to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God. Ancient offerings were brought to the altar and presented dead. The life itself was given to God. But the Christian sacrifice is not to be presented dead—it is to be given to God alive. The life, instead of being consumed in a holocaust, or poured out in a bloody oblation, is to be given to God for service. Christ came to give life to his followers, to give life in abundance. This call to consecration is therefore a call to life at its best. The whole twelfth chapter of Romans may be considered as an interpretation and the filling out of the thought of a "living sacrifice" which St. Paul calls us at the beginning to make. The wonderful teaching that follows explains what these two words mean.



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We are not to be fashioned according to this world, but are to be transformed into the divine beauty. Our life is to be one of service, of love, of devotion.

We talk a great deal about the love of Christ, but we can help the world to know what that love of Christ is, only when in our daily lives we illustrate it and reproduce it. It is our great mission in life to make Jesus Christ appear beautiful to others. It was said of an earnest, unselfish man, that by his own life of devotion he made people fall in love with Jesus Christ. It was said of an old minister who had retired from active service, that it was worth all his salary just to have him live in the town. His life was such a revealing of the life of Christ that wherever he went it was like the shining there of a soft, gentle light.

We are to present our bodies to God as living sacrifices, living, we must remember, not dead. To be dead is to have no more power to do anything. A little child was talking one day in the country about what it was to



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be dead. His mother was trying to explain death to him. He was shown a bumblebee that was not living, and then was asked what it was to be dead. He said: "Not going any more." The child's effort at interpretation was really good. To be dead is to be not going any more, to be without life, without power to do anything. We are called to be living sacrifices.

To be alive, then, is to be going, to be active. All true life has in it the quality of sacrifice. We cannot love really and not make sacrifices. "God so loved the world that he gave." Love always gives—nothing is love that will not give. Two people cannot live together ideally in the sacred relation of marriage and not live sacrificially. There can be no friendship worthy of the name without sacrifice. Friendship always costs—its cost often is very great; we never know what we are engaging to do when we say to a person, "I will be your friend." We cannot do good to others in any effective way without forgetting and denying self in life.



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# The Wider Life

Victor Hugo has taught the world a great deal about true and beautiful life. For instance, in one place, he is writing of what men are by nature: "Men hate, are brutes, fight, lie." Then he says: "But share you your bread with little children, see that no one goes about you with naked feet, look kindly upon mothers nursing their children on the doorsteps of humble cottages, walk through the world without malevolence, do not knowingly crush the humblest flower, respect the needs of birds, bow to the purple from afar and to the poor at close range. Rise to labor, go to rest with prayer, go to sleep in the unknown, have for your pillow the infinite; love, believe, hope, live; be like him who has a watering-pot in his hand, only let your watering-pot be filled with good deeds. Never be discouraged. Be magi, and be fathers, and if you have lands, cultivate them, and if you have sons rear them, and if you have enemies bless them."

This is a suggestion of what it means to



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present our bodies a living sacrifice, to repeat in our own lives, in our own measure, the sweetness, the charity, the kindness and the helpfulness of Jesus Christ. The cross is everywhere. It has been said that one of the best rules for every-day life is to try always to be a little kinder than is necessary—that is, to be a little more self-forgetful than we are required to be, a little more patient, to go two miles when we are required to go only one. The more of the sacrificial quality we get into our life the diviner will it be and the lovelier.

When we use the word sacrifice we think first of the great sacrifice of Christ which is both the model for all Christian life and also its inspiration. Everything good and beautiful gets its motive from the life of Christ which shone with the holiest spirit of sacrifice. We look at his six hours on the cross when we speak of Christ's sacrifice as if that were its one great act and expression. But the cross was not endured by Christ merely during those six hours on Calvary; it was in



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all his life, in every day and hour of it. Everything he did was in love, and love is always a living sacrifice. He was always denying himself. We do not have to be crucified on pieces of wood to bear a cross. When you gave up your own way yesterday for another's sake, when you kept sweet and patient under insult or wrong that hurt you deeply, when you did a kindness to one who had spoken injuriously of you, when you went out of your way to do some gentle thing of love in return for an unkindness—you were making a living sacrifice. On all his days Christ made his life sacrificial. On Calvary he only wrote the word out in capitals.

Ian Maclaren, speaking of the cross, says: "Theological science has shown an unfortunate tendency to monopolize the cross till the symbol of salvation has been lifted out of the ethical setting of the Gospels, and planted in an environment of doctrine." The cross stands not merely for the sufferings of Christ endured in redeeming the world, but also for the law of love and of sacrifice in



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every department of Christian living. It is not enough to have the cross on our churches, as a symbol of redemption, or to wear crucifixes as ornaments; the cross and the crucifix must be in the heart. In a private letter, a high-school teacher, who only recently has learned the true meaning of the Christian life, tells of a girl who said to her one day: "Oh, dear, I have lost my crucifix, and I have nothing left but Christ." The writer says she herself has been driven by circumstances just to Christ, with nothing else, and in him finds new and wonderful revealings every day. He suffices and will suffice. It is well when we learn that it is in Christ himself, not in any symbols, however sacred, that we find the life that has power in it.

The cross must be in the lives of those who follow Christ, not branded on their bodies, but wrought into their character, their disposition, their conduct, their spirit. We cannot live a Christian life for a day without coming to points of sacrifice. The cross of



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Christ does not take our own cross from us—Christ does not bear our cross for us. His cross becomes the law of our life, and makes it all sacrificial. Every beautiful thing in Christian morals and Christian ethics reveals the cross. The Beatitudes are all sacrificial. No one can live the thirteenth of First Corinthians and not crucify self continually.

But all sacrifice at length blossoms into beauty, sweetness, joy. Never be afraid to lose your life in love—you will find it again. In the old legend, the thorns of the thorny crown became lovely roses on Easter morning, every thorn a rose. That is the way all our sacrifices are transformed by the sacrifice of Christ and the discipline of life. The beautiful life is not the one that has known only ease, pleasure, self-indulgence. The iron that is dug out of the hills as ore is not yet ready to be used. It is only ore and has to be put through the glowing furnace where it is transformed into something of great value. The same is true of manhood.



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As Tennyson describes it in "In Memoriam":

*Life is not an idle ore,*
*But iron dug from central gloom*
*And heated hot in burning fears,*
*And dipped in baths of hissing tears,*
*And battered with the shocks of doom,*
*To shape and use.*

Some of us are forever complaining about the hardness of duty—that we have to make so many sacrifices for others, that we have to bear so many burdens, that we have to give up so many pleasant things that others may have them, that we have to suffer so much that others may not suffer. Will we never learn the secret that all our blessings, our sweetest joys, our richest comforts, come out of the very things that we so chafe and fret over?

George Alfred Townsend, referring to some things he saw on an old battlefield many years after the dreadful day, says: "I saw pretty, pure, delicate flowers growing out of



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the empty ammunition boxes, and a wild rose thrusting up its graceful head through the top of a broken Union drum, which doubtless sounded its last charge in that battle, and a cunning scarlet verbena peeping out of a fragment of an exploded shell, in which strange pot it was planted. Wasn't that peace growing out of war? Even so shall the beautiful and graceful ever grow out of the horrid and terrible things that transpire in this changing but ever-advancing world. Nature covers even the battlefields with verdure and bloom. Peace and plenty spring up in the track of devouring campaigns, and all things in nature and society shall work out the progress of mankind."

This is the law of life in Christ. This is one of the ways Christ is saving the world. We are called to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. The sacrifices are not to be made, however, for their own sake. Dr. W. L. Watkinson relates that in a London auction there was a large sale of all kinds of badges of honor—silver stars, gold crosses,



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jewelled medals celebrating heroisms on many historic fields. These were all marks of honor for those who had won them. They were noble decorations for those on whose breasts they had been pinned as tokens of personal worth or of costly achievement. But imagine anyone buying these badges at an auction and then pinning them on his own breast and wearing them out among men. What could they mean to him? He had not won them. They would have been only tawdriest tinsel to him.

Other people's living sacrifices can bring no honor for us. They must be our own; the honors must be won by our own courage, faith and sacrifice. Some people like others to make the sacrifices for them and then let them get the honor. A great humorist in the days of the Civil War used to talk of how many of his relatives he had given to his country's service. Some Christian people like to urge and inspire others to make sacrifices, to give and suffer, while they do nothing of the kind themselves. But we never



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can have other people's badges of sacrifice or decorations of honor pinned upon us. You must present your own body as a living sacrifice to God—your own, not another's. You must bear the cross in your own life.



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# Learning to Pray



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*God answers prayer; sometimes, when hearts are weak,*
*He gives the very gifts believers seek,*
*But often faith must learn a deeper rest,*
*And trust God's silence when he does not speak;*
*For he whose name is Love will send the best,*
*Stars may burn out, nor mountains will endure,*
*But God is true, his promises are sure*
*To those who seek.*

—MYRA G. PLANTZ.



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## CHAPTER TWENTY

# Learning to Pray

WE would say that we do not need to be taught how to pray. Anybody can pray. It is only talking to God, and anybody can do that. It does not require the learning of a new language in order to speak with God, for all languages are familiar to him. Men and women who are about to be presented at royal courts have to be instructed in court etiquette, so that they may conform to the requirements, but there is no heavenly etiquette to master before we can be admitted into the presence of God, to offer our worship, and to present our requests. Why then do we have to learn to pray?

Yet, simple as prayer is and open as the door is to all who come to speak to God, we do need to learn to pray. The Bible is



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full also of lessons on praying. The disciples of Jesus had always prayed, but we are told that once when they saw their Master at prayer, something so impressed them that they felt they never had really prayed. So they asked him to teach them to pray. And we all need to be taught how to pray. No matter how long we have been in the habit of praying, nor how much blessing we have received in answer to our requests, we are only beginners. Every day we should ask our Master to teach us some new lesson in praying.

There are certain people who seem to have found a secret of prayer which we have never yet learned. These favored ones may teach us how to pray so as to get richer blessing than we have yet received. A little child missed her mother at a certain time every day. The mother's habit was to slip away upstairs alone, and to be gone for some time. The child noticed that the mother was always gentler, quieter and sweeter after she came back. Her face had lost its weary



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look and was shining. Her voice was gladder, more cheerful.

"Where do you go, mother," the child said thoughtfully, "when you leave us every day?"

"I go upstairs to my room," said the mother.

"Why do you go to your room?" continued the little questioner. "You always come back with your face shining. What makes it shine so?"

"I go to pray," replied the mother reverently.

The child was silent for a little while, and then she said softly: "Teach me how to pray, mother."

There are no more sacred moments in any home than when a child is bending at a mother's knee, learning to lisp its first little prayer. A mother's prayers are never forgotten. The boy becomes a man, but in all his years of toil, struggle, temptation, duty and sorrow, he remembers his mother's early lessons in prayer. The childhood prayers



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themselves are never forgotten. They live on through all the life and often become the daily prayer of old age, and are the prayers said in dying.

"When ye pray, say 'Father.'" That one word is the key to the whole mystery of prayer. When Jesus taught his disciples to speak to God, calling him by that blessed name, he gave them the largest of all lessons in prayer. When we can look into God's face and say "Father," it is easy to go on. The world is different then. God loves to be called by that name and it opens his heart to hear all we say and to grant all that we ask. One writes:

*My little girl, to-night, with childish glee,*
*Although her months have numbered not two score,*
*Escaped her nurse, and at my study door,*
*With tiny fingers rapping, spoke to me.*
*Though faint her words, I heard them tremblingly*
*Fall from her lips, as if the darkness bore*
*Its weight upon her. "Father's child." No more*



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*I waited for, but straightway willingly*
*I brought the sweet intruder into light,*
*With happy laughter.*

Such power has the word "father," spoken by a child, to open a human heart. Such power too, has the name "Father" to find and open the heart of God. If we can say "Father" when we come to the gate, we shall not need to say anything more. If you believe that God really is your Father, you will no longer have any question as to whether you may pray to him, or as to how to pray.

You thought before you began to speak that you knew what you needed. If only you could have that, your bliss would be complete, you said. But God wanted to make your happiness full, and he knew that this thing you asked for would not do it. So he withheld the wish of your heart in its precise form, and gave you the good you needed in another way. You prayed that the sick friend, who seemed about to be taken from



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you, might be spared. However, death came on apace. "Why did not God answer my prayer?" Are you sure he did not? You loved your friend, and wanted the best thing that God had for him. Well, did not God give him his very best?

One of the first lessons we must learn in praying is to submit all our wishes to God. Of course we cannot know what we ought to pray for as well as God knows. To pray insubmissively is, therefore, not to pray acceptably. The highest reach of faith is loving, intelligent consecration of all our life to the will of God.

*"Laid on thine altar, O my Lord divine,*
*Accept this gift to-day, for Jesus' sake.*
*I have no jewels to adorn thy shrine,*
*Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make;*
*But here I bring within my trembling hand*
*This will of mine—a thing that seemeth small—*
*And thou alone, O Lord, canst understand*
*How, when I yield thee this, I yield mine all.*



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*"Hidden therein thy searching gaze can see*
*Struggles of passion, visions of delight,*
*All that I have, or am, or fain would be—*
*Deep loves, fond hopes and longings infinite.*
*It hath been wet with tears and dimmed with sighs,*
*Clenched in my grasp till beauty it hath none:*
*Now from thy footstool, where it vanquished lies,*
*The prayer ascendeth, 'May thy will be done!'*

*"Take it, O Father, ere my courage fail,*
*And merge it so in thine own will that e'en*
*If in some desperate hour my cries prevail,*
*And thou give back my gift, it may have been*
*So changed, so purified, so fair have grown,*
*So one with thee, so filled with peace divine,*
*I may not know or feel it as mine own,*
*But, gaining back my will, may find it thine."*

Some prayers are answered in strange ways. Here is a little story recently told. A lawyer came to his client and said he could not prosecute a certain claim. The client wanted to know the reason. The lawyer told him of a visit he had made.



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"I found the house and knocked, but nobody heard me. So I stepped into the little hall, and through a crack in the door I saw a cosey sitting room, and on the bed, her head high on the pillows, an old woman. I was about to knock again, when the woman said: 'Come, father, now begin. I am all ready.' Down on his knees by her side went the old, white-haired man, and I could not have knocked then for the life of me.

"Well, he began. First he reminded God that they were still his submissive children, and that whatever he saw fit to bring upon them, they would accept. It would be hard for them to be homeless in their old age. How different it would have been if at least one of the boys had been spared!

"The old man's voice broke then, and a thin white hand stole from under the coverlet and moved softly through his snowy hair. He went on presently, saying that nothing ever could be so hard again as the parting with the three boys had been—unless mother and he should be separated. Then he quoted sev-



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eral promises assuring the safety of those who put their trust in God. Last of all he prayed for God's blessing on those who were demanding justice."

The lawyer then said to his client, "I would rather go to the poor-house to-night myself than to stain my hands and heart with such persecution as that."

"Afraid to defeat the old man's prayer?" asked the client, with hard tone.

"Bless your soul, man," said the lawyer, "you couldn't defeat that prayer. Of all the pleading I ever heard, that moved me most. Why I was sent to hear that prayer I am sure I do not know. But I hand the case over."

"I wish," said the client uneasily, "that you hadn't told me about the old man's prayer."

"Why so?"

"Well, because I want the money that the house would bring. I was taught the Bible myself when I was a boy, and I hate to run against it. I wish you hadn't heard a word the old man said. Another time I would not



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listen to petitions not intended for my ears."

The lawyer smiled. "My dear fellow," he said, "you are wrong again. That prayer was intended for my ears, and yours, too. God Almighty meant it so. My mother used to sing, 'God moves in a mysterious way.'"

"Well, my mother used to sing that, too," said the client, and he twisted the claim papers in his fingers. "You can call in the morning, and tell mother and him that the claim has been met."

God will always find some way to answer his children's prayers. We need not trouble ourselves as to how he can do this—that is not our matter. All we have to do is to lay our need before the throne of mercy, and to let God answer us as he will.

Another thing many of us need to learn is to widen our prayers. Some of us live in a little room without windows and never get a glimpse of anybody's needs but our own. A minister had a parishioner who did not



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believe in missions. One day he said to him: "I am going away for a month, and I have a request to make of you. It is that while I am absent you will not pray once for yourself or any of your own family." The man promised—it seemed easy. The first evening when the time came for prayer he knelt as usual, but he couldn't think of anything to say. He had always prayed for himself, his wife, his little girl, his home, his business. Now he must leave out all these, and there seemed to be nothing else he cared enough for to bring it to God. He discovered how selfishly he had been living. It was a hard month for him, but he learned his lesson. When his pastor returned he could pray for all men, all the world, and for missions. It would do many of us good to leave out in our praying all requests for ourselves and ours for a month. Then our prayers would be widened.

Some of us find life hard. It is full of cares and questions, of tasks and duties, of temptations and dangers. There are thorns and



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briers among its roses. There are pitfalls in its sunniest paths. The Master's cause needs help which we cannot give. If we do not know how to pray we never can get through the days. The privilege of prayer is always ours. The window toward heaven is always open. Any moment we can look up and say Father! and instantly the face of God will shine upon us and all will be well.

THE END



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"Thought once awak'd
never again shall
slumber" — Carlyle.

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# REV. JAMES R. MILLER

July 5, 1912.

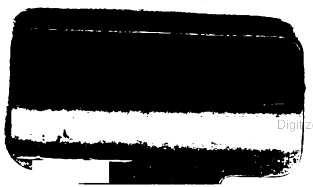
## Funeral of Veteran Author and Clergyman to Be Held Tomorrow.

The funeral of Rev. James Russell Miller, Presbyterian minister, author and scholar, who died Tuesday night at his home, No. 4224 Spruce street, will be held in St. Paul's Church, Fiftieth street and Baltimore avenue, tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock. The interment will be in West Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Dr. Miller, who was 72 years old, was the founder of St. Paul's Church. He was born in Washington county, Pa., March 20, 1840, and, after attending public schools in his native town, was a student in Beaver Academy and Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pa. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1862 and the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1880. In 1870 he married Miss Louise Elizabeth King in Argyle, N. Y.

During the civil war he was connected with the United States Christian Commission, from 1863 to 1865. He was pastor of the United Presbyterian Church, New Wilmington, Pa., 1867-1869; pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1869-1878; Rock Island (Ill.) Presbyterian church, 1878-1880; Hollond Memorial Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1881-1898; St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1889-1912. Dr. Miller was widely known for his literary talents. He was editor of the Presbyterian Board of Publication since 1880.

His books met with wonderful success, having been translated into German, French, Japanese and Hungarian editions, and more than a million and a half copies have been sold in this country and England alone. Dr. Miller resigned as pastor of St. Paul's Church in January and for more than two months has been in ill-health. He is survived by his widow, two sons and a daughter.



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